

Editorial

"It is a new Society that we are working to realise, not a Cleaning up of our present tyrannical muddle into an improved, smoothly-working form of that same "order", a mass of dull and useless people organised into classes, amidst which the antagonism should be moderated and veiled so that they should act as checks on each other for the insurance of the stability of the system."

William Morris, *Commonweal*, July, 1885

NLR is a development of *Universities and Left Review* and *The New Reasoner*. The political discussion which those two journals have begun, and the contacts they have made are the basis of the New Left. Whatever we are able to do in the journal will, we believe, be an organic growth out of the two different traditions from which we began. In particular, we are anxious to maintain the wide scope of *NLR*. We are convinced that politics, too narrowly conceived, has been a main cause of the decline of socialism in this country, and one of the reasons for the disaffection from socialist ideas of young people in particular. The humanist strengths of socialism—which are the foundations for a genuinely popular socialist movement—must be developed in cultural and social terms, as well as in economic and political. What we need now is a language sufficiently close to life—all aspects of it—to declare our discontent with "has same order".

The purpose of discussing the cinema or teen-age culture in *NLR* is not to show that, in some modish way, we are keeping up with the times. These are directly relevant to the imaginative resistances of people who have to live within capitalism—the growing points of social discontent, the projections of deeply-felt needs. Our experience of life today is so extraordinarily fragmented. The task of socialism is to meet people where they *are*, where they are touched, bitten, moved, frustrated, nauseated—to develop discontent and, at the same time, to give the socialist movement some *direct* sense of the times and ways in which we live.

At the same time, the traditional task of socialist analysis will still remain. The anatomy of power, the relationship of business to politics, the role of ideology, the analysis of transitional programmes and demands, are all central to that discussion of the state, without which there can be no clarity, either of theory or practice.

The journal, then, will range widely. But in political terms, *NLR* represents a real break-through for us: a break-through, both in terms of regular, frequent publication, a skeletal but permanent organisation, as well as the new audiences with whom we can communicate. Because of the disaster of the Election, and the loss of direction within the establishments of the left, many people are anxiously feeling their way forward. Three

years ago, such people might have regarded *NLR* as a wierd intellectual junket. Now they feel that our emphasis up cia an and education is a common concern. On our side, we feel the urgent need to enlarge our own experiences by drawing into discussion people also have a different sense of the society. Our hope is that *NLR* WJv'rViT to life genuine dialogue between intellectual and industrial workers.

Some point, the distant wariness between intellectual and industrial workers *must* be broken down. It is one of the most dangerous aspects of the present plight of the socialist movement. Our hope is that *NLR* will begin to knit together this broken conversation. This is particularly important when we consider the question of social ownership. Many of those in the Labour Party and the Trade Unions who declare for social ownership, have reservations about the *form* which it should take. So have we. The present form of nationalisation is not a socialist for it does not give ordinary men and women direct control over their own lives. Nor does the "public corporation" form of nationalisation confront—as a socialist measure should—the urgent problems of a modern industrial society: such questions as bureaucracy, the distance between men and decisions which affect them, the problems of over-centralisation, ar the vested power of the new propertied classes. Here, a whole neglected tradition within socialism needs to be imaginatively rediscovered: but that will be a sterile task, if it is not enriched by the experience of men and women who work in industry. We must confront this question of bureaucracy, which touches us all, together.

A large number of people whom we have drawn together around the two reviews are anxious to do something—to find a form of political activity which matches their political commitments. We are oigcd by their impatience with the hesitancies which we have shown for organisation. This can be ignored no longer. But we need to say, as firmly as we can, that the most urgent task for socialism today remains the clarification of ideas. The movement has never before been so short on ideas, so long on pious waffle. Not until we attain this clarity, through a decisive shift in political consciousness throughout the movement, will we be able to work with a revolutionary perspective in view. We shall continue to bounce from one side to another, fighting a perpetual rear-guard action, a "holding operation", while the champions of "me-too" advance into the calm waters of an "American" future. Our hope is that people in the New Left will feel, with a special urgency, the poverty of ideas in the Labour Movement. The strength of the New Left will be tested the strength of its ideas: we shall have to hold fast to that, as the pressure builds up to "cease talking and begin doings".

The journal, then, books and pamphlets getting a wide and more representative circulation, schools and conferences and discussions—these make up the spearhead of the New Left. As we open up some of the hidden recesses of “Britain: unknown country”, it would be wrong for intellectual workers to discard their proper role, or unlike the pioneers of socialism, to flatter the rank and file and ourselves into a safe complacency, by abasing ourselves before the altar of *action*—at any price.

Granted that, what follows? We have spoken of the New Left as a “movement of ideas”: the phrase suggests, both the place we accord to socialist analysis and polemic, and the natural growth of ideas, through people, into socialist activity. It is, in one sense, *education* which the socialist movement lacks most of all: the job of the New Left is to provide this kind of service for the Labour Movement. But education is too inactive and rigid a term—suggesting the stiff approach of teacher to pupil, the dull atmosphere of classroom and Party headquarters, where socialist ideas raise their ugly heads, are looked at distantly, and—for want of interest or vigour—fade and die away into the shadows again. What we need is a living movement of people, battering away at the problems of socialism in the mid-Twentieth Century, pooling their experiences, yet, at every point, breaking back into the Labour Movement, thrusting forward like so many uninvited guests into Constituency Parties and Trade Union branches, pushing within CND, picking up the quick tissues in the society, sloughing off the dead.

We are, then moving beyond education in the narrow sense to political activity in all its aspects. What we need are not only discussion groups, but *centres of socialist work and activity*—rallying points of disturbance and discontent within the local community, the nerve centres of a genuinely popular and informed socialist movement. We shall—in Left Clubs or Tribune Societies, informal groups and university clubs—be parallel to, rather than competing with, existing organisations of the Labour Movement: free where they are tied, maintaining a direct link with similar movements and tendencies in other countries. The Left Clubs, and other similar centres with whom we want to maintain informal links, will not look towards some centre for directives and guidance, whence the tables of the Socialist Law will be dispensed, but press in upon the centre with their own initiatives. These ought to be, moreover, centres of socialist activity, where a *demonstration* of socialism can be made, and where the fragmentary sense of community and solidarity, which used to be part of the socialist movement, can be pieced together again. A movement, that is to say, whose open form and diverse activities will reflect the breadth of the New Left, but which will continually pioneer new and flexible ways of working through, between, around the frozen monoliths of the Labour Movement.

Indeed, the test of such centres as Left Clubs—or other New Left kinds of groups—might be whether or not they are able to break out of the distressingly narrow way in which socialist organisation is discussed today. This is often limited to “transforming the Labour Party from

within”, and resolution-passing—all of which is necessary, but limited. As if socialism turned today on the question of formal allegiances, as if the whole electorate were under the constant watchful eye of the Parliamentary whips! Where the candidates are good, we should concentrate our forces, swing the enthusiasm of a Left Club behind someone who will vote NO to the Bomb, when the rest of the parliamentary fraternity troop through the door into no-man’s-land: where the candidate is weak, bad, compromising, we should draw away from political blackmail as if from the plague. The last refuge of scoundrels today is no longer the appeal for “patriotism”, but the cry that we must sink our differences in the interests of Party Unity. Socialists should cease to squander their energies upon scoundrels, and should cease to allow them to betray the enthusiasm of the young. They should give or withhold their support by their own choice and according to socialist priorities. They should vote with their feet—in both directions: the protest march or the boycott.

Where there are CND or Direct Action demonstrations, Left Clubs should be the most active group. Where there are groups of houses without an active community life, where there are young people without a youth club, where there are responsible rank-and-file strikers being snubbed by Trade Union leaders, or coloured workers being frozen out by Trade Union rank-and-filers, there is work for us to do. The methods of direct action, so effectively used in the Campaign, ought to be interpreted by Left Clubs and similar groups. The test of such centres of New Left activity might be if, amongst their most active members, there are Party activists and political “unclubbables”, students and teen-agers, teachers and members of the Trades Council. The old timers will want to organise the young: will they take it? The younger people will want to play jazz and show films: will the old stagers let them? Can we find a way of working together which marries the two elements of a socialist movement: the theoretical analysis which gives the movement perspective, the clarion call to moral principle, taken up in an unashamed way, which gives the movement guts?

One cannot prescribe forms of activity for a democratic Socialist movement. It is often a question of *response* as well as initiative—the quick and imaginative response to international or national crisis, or local opportunities, as they disclose themselves. But in and out and alongside all other activity, there is always the work of “the Socialist Propaganda”. The Labour Movement is not in its insurrectionary phase: we are in our missionary phase. The Left Clubs and New Left centres—the New Left in general—must pioneer a way forward by working for socialism as the old missionaries worked: as if consumed by a fire that is capable of lighting the darker places in our society. We have to go out into towns and cities, universities and technical colleges, youth clubs and Trade Union branches, and—as Morris said—*make socialists* there. We have come through 200 years of capitalism and 100 years of imperialism. Why should people—naturally—turn to socialism? There is no law

which says that the Labour Movement, like a great inhuman engine, is going to throb its way into socialism, or that we can, any longer—as the Labour Party does—rely upon poverty and exploitation to drive people, like blind animals, towards socialism. Socialism is, and will remain, an active faith in a new society, a faith to which we turn as conscious, thinking human beings. People have to be confronted with experience, called to the “society of equals”, not because they have never had it so bad, but because the “society of equals” is better than the best soft-selling consumer-capitalist society, and life is something *lived*, not something one passes through like tea through a strainer.

How close Morris came to the bone! He looked right across history and, with remarkable insight, saw into our particular predicament. There, on the streets of Nairobi is Morris’s “tyranny”: here, in the ageing dock-yards, the cluttered roads and railway stations, the decaying centres of our cities, the closing nationalised collieries, is his “muddle”. In Parliament, sit Tweedledum and

Tweedledee, “cleaning up”, “improving”—the field of political vision narrowed to the dismal task of capturing control of that system of “checks” and balances—Her Majesty’s Government—for the insurance of the stability of the system”. Only the plush carpet, the dispatch boxes and Black Rod keep them from one another’s arms. And in the country, a thousand Productivity Committees, a fleet of Royal Commissions, a covey of bi-Partisan Parliamentary Delegations, a brace of dinners in celebration of “our Bomb” and “the great Atlantic Alliance”, a scatter of knighthoods and orders and decorations, keep antagonism “moderate” and “veiled”.

Now, perhaps, we can finish the Morris quote:

“The real business of Socialists is to impress on the workers the fact that they are a class, whereas they ought to be Society. . . . The work that lies before us at present is to make Socialists, to cover the country with a network of associations composed of men who feel their antagonism to the dominant classes, and have no temptation to waste their time in the thousand follies of party politics.”



‘Shh! Don’t Rock the Boat!’

Our thanks are due to Abu and the Observer for permission to reprint cartoons.

The Sickness of Labourism

Ralph Miliband

"It is a very difficult country to move, Mr. Hynband, a very difficult country indeed, and one in which there is more disappointment to be looked for than success."

Disraeli, 1881.

THE LAST General Election has had at least one beneficial result: it has shocked many more people into a recognition of the fact that the Labour Party is a sick party. And it has also helped many more people within it to realise that the sickness is not a surface ailment, a temporary indisposition, but a deep organic disorder, of which repeated electoral defeats are not the cause but the symptom. What this means is that the sickness would have been as serious if Labour had *won* the last election. Victory at the polls, given Labour's recent history, policies and leadership, would only have delayed the crisis, for a while, and given the Labour Party an altogether deceptive appearance of health. This is why a proper diagnosis must take electoral defeat into account, but only as one element of Labour's condition.

One common diagnosis is that which identifies Labour's sickness as that of ambiguity. This, it is worth remembering, is a very old story. "The Labour Party", R. H. Tawney was writing in 1932, "is hesitant in action, because divided in mind. It does not achieve what it could because it does not know what it wants." Much the same has been said periodically about the Labour Party from the earliest days of its existence, and it could easily be argued that it fits the present situation equally well.

In one sense, it certainly does. But in another, and no less important sense, such a diagnosis misses some important changes which have occurred in the Labour Party in recent years. For, if it is true that the Labour Party itself suffers from ambiguity, its leadership, and particularly its Leader, do not. At the risk of seeming to trivialise great issues, it is therefore with the leadership that one must begin.

Moving tributes have been paid to Mr. Gaitskell's vigour and forcefulness during the last election campaign. And indeed, it would be ungenerous to deny that Mr. Gaitskell is capable of displaying these and other such virtues. This, however, is not the point. The real question is what Mr. Gaitskell is vigorous and forceful *about*, and what, more generally, he has been about ever since he became the leader of the Labour Party. The question would matter much less had not Mr. Gaitskell achieved, in a very short time, so real a measure of success in his set purpose of re-educating the Labour Party into his own view of "socialism". As it is, what he is about matters a great deal. It is true that leaders reflect tendencies. But there are times when leaders can powerfully re-inforce tendencies and greatly help to give them sharp political content. To ignore this in relation

to the recent history of the Labour Party is to fall into the crassest kind of determinism. Mr. Gaitskell's contribution to the re-education of Labour is not, by any means, the whole story. But it is an important part of it.

There is, of course, much resemblance between Mr. Gaitskell's approach to politics and that of his predecessors. Like him, they were always more concerned to reassure their opponents than to enthuse their supporters. Like him, they always deemed it essential to act, and to be seen to act, on the premise that the creation of a socialist society was an aim distant to the point of invisibility. Like him, they always found a more compelling attraction (to put it very mildly) in programmes and policies of modest social reform than in any policy or action that looked capable of pushing the Labour Party beyond the partial humanisation of capitalist society. (Anyone who has any doubt or illusion on this score should look back to the debates of the 1944 Annual Conference of the Labour Party, when rank and file pressure alone compelled a reluctant leadership to include any nationalisation proposals in the programme with which Labour won the 1945 election).

Even so, there are certain differences between Mr. Gaitskell and his predecessors which are of importance. Those predecessors, however timid, orthodox and hide-bound, were not really disposed to argue that the transformation of Britain into a socialist society on the basis of common ownership was not the ultimate purpose of the Labour Party. The view they always took was that this would take an exceedingly long time, and that it would be fatal to rush into anything;—and of course they always conveniently found that the electorate, or the state of the country, or whatever, made advance extremely difficult, not to say impossible. Hence their eagerness "to consolidate" after 1948–9. But they did not, in ideological terms, view the measures of common ownership undertaken after 1945 as marking, for all practical purposes, the end of the process. Mr. Morrison, in this instance, is typical of an older leadership. It was he who ardently spoke for "consolidation" in 1948; but it is also he who now complains, as well he might, that the leadership is too shy about common ownership. On this issue, the traditional quarrel between Right and Left was about the *speed* of advance, not about the ultimate desirability of advance itself.

Mr. Gaitskell and his ideological friends view these matters very differently. For they do not believe that the purpose of the Labour Party ought to be the creation of a socialist society on the basis of common ownership. On the contrary, they believe that common ownership, as a basic purpose of the Labour Party, is not only electorally damaging, but irrelevant and obsolete.

This, it has been made quite clear, does not mean that

Mr. Gaitskell and his friends are opposed, in any doctrinaire fashion, to *any* kind of extension of public ownership. They easily grant that cases could arise, here and there, in which some firm or even some industry might not be "serving the nation well", and ought therefore, in the fulness of time and after "independent" inquiry, to come under public ownership or some diluted version thereof. Flexible in all things, they concede, in other words, that there is something to be said for public ownership in terms of isolated, piecemeal and remedial action, mainly designed to increase the efficiency of an economy whose predominantly private basis they do not seriously propose to question. This, incidentally, is also the enlighteneed Tory view—or soon will be.

To ask Mr. Gaitskell or Mr. Jay whether they believe in common ownership is therefore to confuse issues and to help them to confuse issues. In the sense defined above, they do, though not in the least keenly. In any sense which entails a view of common ownership as a prime part of Labour's purpose, designed to *replace* capitalist ownership and control, they do not. They have, whatever the rhetoric, made their permanent peace with what they hesitate, not surprisingly, to call a capitalist economy, however much they might object to this or that particular feature of it. They might want a Labour government to exercise some greater measure of control over the "commanding heights" of the economy; but this is hardly something that need greatly disturb the present controllers of economic life.

Ever since 1950, when he became Chancellor of the Exchequer in Mr. Attlee's administration, Mr. Gaitskell has shown, on a multitude of issues, home and foreign, that he finds it exceedingly difficult to give any concrete meaning to the socialism he professes. But in hardly any instance has he demonstrated this more convincingly than in his quite unambiguous insistence that the Labour Party is permanently installed in the so-called mixed economy, not as a matter of expediency, but as a matter of principle. The trouble is that the "mixed economy", whatever else it may be, bears no resemblance, nor will ever bear any resemblance, to the kind of society which the Labour Party has always said it wanted to see come into being.

This is a difficulty which Mr. Gaitskell, when he became leader of the Labour Party, bravely set out to remedy—by re-educating the Party into a new view, which is really a very old view, despite all the inflated claims of "new thinking", of Labour's purpose. The major fruit of these efforts was *Industry and Society*, the Stockbroker's approach to Socialism, which represented an important, though still intermediate, stage in the assumption by the Labour Party of an "image" free from tiresome socialist implications. With the endorsement of that document by the 1957 Annual Conference of the Labour Party, Mr. Gaitskell, had he won the election, could legitimately have looked forward to fresh and even greater successes in his re-educational endeavours, not only in relation to public ownership, but on all issues over which the Labour

movement might have been tempted to press for the adoption of other than orthodox postures.

However, the attempt to imprison the Labour Party into a purely labourist mould has now been checked, at least temporarily—not, as it should have been, from within, but because not enough voters found Labour's "image" sufficiently attractive to ensure Mr. Gaitskell's translation to the premiership, television gimmickry notwithstanding. Defeat has helped to force back on to the agenda a host of fundamental questions concerning Labour's ultimate character and purposes. The debate is again open.

The new thinkers must now expose their ideas to the clear light of day. And this is a dangerous venture simply because these ideas amount to no more than a plea for Labour's return to the old days before 1918, when the Party did not have a Constitution which held socialist implications. It is the poverty of these ideas which leads Mr. Gaitskell to try and frighten a Party Conference with the thought that commitment to common ownership means the nationalisation of pubs and garages. It is the same poverty which drives Mr. Healey to plead that Labour drop socialisation in order to help the African people.

The Poverty of Labourism

It would be wrong to suggest that the programme on which Mr. Gaitskell fought the last election (what he himself called "a programme of modest social reform") was a shocking novelty in Labour's electoral history. On the contrary, with the exception of 1945, modest programmes of social reform have always formed the substance of Labour's appeals to the electorate. Mr. Gaitskell was, in this respect, well within the tradition; he only made the tradition more explicit, more emphatic.

Nor, it is equally well worth recalling, was it ever, in electoral terms, a very successful tradition. The way some people now talk, one would think that the Labour Party had marched from triumph to triumph throughout its history, only now to be the victim of an unkind fate. In fact, the Labour Party never won an election, from 1900 to 1945, a record which, in the light of the history of those years, is truly remarkable.

There is, however, a difference between Labour's pre-war electoral record and its electoral record since 1951. In the earlier period, it made steady gains (save in the somewhat special circumstances of 1931); since 1951, it has suffered slow but steady decline. In between, there were the three elections of 1945, 1950 and 1951. In each of these, it increased its popular poll—indeed, it reached its electoral peak in 1951, after six years of Labour Government, when it obtained nearly 14 million votes, to 48.77 per cent of the total votes cast. The decline began *after* 1951.

There have been put forward a good many explanations of this phenomenon. Some of these have been very fancy indeed, and have depended on a highly impressionistic kind of political sociology; others have expressed little more than their authors' particular likes

and dislikes, projected on to the minds of the electorate. There are, however, two sets of facts which, though they may not serve as a complete explanation, have yet, it is reasonable to suggest, a great deal to do with one. One of these concerns the Labour Party, the other the Conservative Party.

In an historical perspective, the achievements of the Labour administrations of 1945–51 may well come to be seen as the maximum expression of Labourism in action. Having given substance and form to the “Welfare State”, strengthened the bias to State intervention in economic affairs, completed a programme of marginal nationalisation, and generally brought the discussion of social and economic affairs on to a different plane, the Labour Party was then faced with the choice either of going forward with a programme which, by necessity, would have transcended the traditional categories of Labourism, or with a programme of tinkering empiricism within the framework of capitalist society. The tension between these two choices was best mirrored in the Labour leadership’s doubts and hesitations with regard to the nationalisation of steel and in its evermore shame-faced commitment to that measure. In the event, the choice which *was* made, and which was given an altogether new, though not yet final, degree of ideological and political precision by Mr. Gaitskell, has deeply affected the life and appearance of the Labour Party in these last years.

Because of that choice, the Labour Party has given the distinct impression that it was less and less sure, not about its ultimate purposes, but that it had any ultimate purpose at all. Because of that choice, it has, both in the country and in Parliament, been hesitant, fumbling, petulant—and boring. The rhetoric of its leaders has not carried conviction because its leaders have appeared to lack the conviction of their rhetoric. Increasingly, they have treated the voters not as potential comrades but as possible clients. The less substantial their programme and policies, the more frantic has been the effort to give them gloss and polish. Neither on issues of home affairs, nor in relation to the H-Bomb, NATO and foreign affairs generally, have the Labour leaders appeared as a clear alternative to the Tories. The reason for this is not that they were unable—somehow—to put over their case. The reason is that they were not such an alternative.

This of course was a great help to the Tory Party. Whoever it is that never had it so good, the Tories never had it so easy. But the Tories, as they have always done in the past, also helped themselves.

The Tory Party has always been a much more complicated and sensitive animal than Labour has made allowance for. It has been, is and will remain, the main political expression of ruling class power—the party of property and privilege. It is also (and in this it really differs from the Labour Party) the political repository of much civilised savagery; a high proportion of its activist rank and file, as indeed of its parliamentary representation, can safely be relied on to express, publicly, but even more, privately, views and opinions which often seem to

be part of the domain of psychopathology rather than of politics.

Were this all, the Tory Party would not be the most successful conservative Party in the world; indeed, it would long have ceased to occupy a significant place in political life.

But this is not all. The Tory Party is a deeply class-conscious party, much more so than the Labour Party, and its class-consciousness includes an awareness, however reluctant, however delayed its effects, that if the essentials of the social system it serves are to be preserved, some concessions have to be made to the pressures of the democracy. Thus the Tory Party adjusted itself to an extended suffrage, to trade union growth, to welfare services, to the emergence of the Labour Party as Opposition and as Government, to State intervention in economic affairs, even to the nationalisation of public utilities. It is now well advanced in the process of adapting itself to a mean, half-hearted, messy kind of labourism.

This flexibility at least helps to explain why a substantial proportion of the Tory Party’s electoral clientèle and of its support in the country has always included masses of people who had neither power, nor property, nor privilege.

Inevitably, the bidding has now to be much higher than it was before the War—thanks largely to Labour efforts. The Tory Party must now present more of a Labourist image if it is to be electorally successful. It is at least highly unlikely that it could now repeat its pre-war triumphs (and they were as remarkable as Labour’s defeats) on the basis of a real dedication to “free enterprise”, pure and simple. It is part of its skill that it knows this—or that enough of its leaders know it to make a bastard kind of Labourism part of its appeal.

This is another reason why the Labour Party, *as the party of Labourism*, now finds it more difficult to present a distinctive view of itself, and appears to be fighting on marginal and not on central issues, as indeed it mostly is. In this kind of battle, the Tory Party starts with immense advantages: it is clear in its purpose; it has money and influence; it can play upon deeply rooted prejudices and rely upon manufactured political illiteracy. On *this* terrain, Labour is engaged in an altogether unequal contest.

Of course, it may well be that economic crisis, allied to the imperative demands of its special clientèle will, at some point or other, make it much more difficult, perhaps even impossible, for the Tory Party to continue showing a Labourist image. Accident may bring the Labour Party back to office on the downturn of an economic swing. But it is nonsense to think that a return to office in such circumstances, on the basis of a Labourist programme of “modest social reform”, which is what is entailed by the Gaitskellian perspective, would be sufficient to make another Labour Government more than an awkward and temporary visitor to the ministerial establishment. There simply isn’t enough wind in present-day Labourism to fill the political sails of another Labour administration.

The Labour Party does not now stand at the cross-roads. It made a choice, or rather it accepted the choice that was made for it. Electoral defeat has now forced it, as a Party, to pause and ask itself whether the road leads anywhere. It does—to the political graveyard. And it is by no means certain that, as a Party, it will not continue to travel along that road.

On the other hand, it is *not* inevitable that the Labour Party should continue towards the political graveyard. It is within its power to retrace its steps and dedicate itself anew to the socialist policies which are its only alternative. In terms of programme and in the immediate, local context, this means, above all, a specific and unambiguous rededication to common ownership as Labour's central and distinctive purpose. Certainly, there is everything to be said for any amount of "re-thinking" on the problems which the translation of that purpose into practice does raise, such as, for instance, the problem of organisation and structure, of participation and responsibility, of control and coordination. But what does not admit of "re-thinking", at least for a party which claims to be committed to the creation of a socialist order of society, is whether common ownership *is* central to its purpose.

A programme of common ownership does not, obviously enough, exhaust the commitment of a socialist party. But it is not the elaboration of a comprehensive socialist programme which presents the major difficulty. It is the will to have one, and to act upon it.

In this connection, it seems to me altogether wrong for those who wish to see the Labour Party embark upon a socialist course to try and tempt the doubters by asserting that a socialist programme is bound to result in a spectacular Labour victory at the next election. This could well have been said with a real measure of confidence in 1950 or 1951. To say it now, categorically, is to ignore a good deal that has happened in the intervening years. It is, for instance, to forget the fact that the Labour Party and the Trade Unions have not only failed, in those years, to do a job of socialist education, in word and also in deed, but that many of its leaders have, more positively, been powerful contributing agents to the contemporary trivialisation of politics and to the creation of an image of socialism as a mean little experiment in bureaucratic piecemeal social engineering. To take but one example from the last election campaign: pension schemes are important, but they cannot be the showpiece of a serious political party. A party which does make pensions its howpiece at election time is a sick party, immured in a rame of mind which excludes the noise and the bustle, the challenge and the promise, the adventure and the dedication which are at the core of socialism. And they wonder why youth finds them trivial bores!

Whether Labour would or would not win the next election on a socialist programme, no one can tell. But defeat on such a programme, if it were to occur, would not cause the demoralisation which defeat on a Labourist programme must inevitably produce. Nor in any case can election prospects ever be the ultimate criterion of

policy. In this respect, the victory of 1945 has had one very bad consequence, in that it has so powerfully reinforced Labour's ministerialist obsession. There is no inherent virtue in opposition; but it is all too easy to exaggerate the virtues of office, as a thing-in-itself, independently of the real, concrete purposes office is intended to serve. Politics, lots of people need to learn again, are not exclusively electoral.

Nor is the preparation of a programme, however excellent, in the least sufficient. Programmes have to be lived, explained, defended, fought for—not only at elections and not only in spasms of parliamentary rhetoric but, over a multitude of diverse issues, great and small, as part of a continuous challenge to the fatal assumption that we live in a B.B.C. world of minor disagreements.

This said, it would be foolish not to see that, with some exceptions, the Labour and Trade Union leaders *do* live in a B.B.C. world of minor disagreements with their opponents (their Tory opponents, that is), and that they have no intention of embarking on anything resembling a socialist course. To slur over this fact is to overlook one of the essential aspects of political life. Not to overlook it is to ask what is the role of the Left at the present time.

There are two temptations to which the Left has always been prone: the first is to overestimate its immediate political chances and the second is to underestimate the influence and power it can wield. The first leads to grandiloquent announcements that inexorable forces are about to sweep the old order, including the Labour leaders, into that famous old dustbin of history. The second temptation, which often seizes people who had earlier given way to the first, leads to cynicism, despair and, in one form or another, withdrawal.

The Left in Britain, inside and outside the Labour Party, organised or dispersed, has always fought a minority battle, and has more often suffered serious defeats than known substantial victories. It has never come anywhere near to dislodging the orthodox controllers of the Labour Party and the Trade Unions from their entrenched positions, not even in the worst days of MacDonaldism. But the view that it has therefore had no impact upon the Labour movement is a misreading of history. For the Left, in actual fact, and despite all its defeats, has had sufficient influence to keep alive a vision, an impulse and a demand which Labour leaders, for all their Conference victories, have always been forced to reckon with. Had this not been the case in the 1920's, MacDonaldism would have finally captured the Labour Party; had it not been the case in the 1930's, the victory of 1945 would have been translated into far fewer achievements. Were it not the case today, the Labour Party might much more easily be led into the footsteps of the French and German Social-democratic parties. What the Left has always done is to prevent the Labour leadership from giving way completely to its inclinations; and, given the nature of these inclinations, this is something of great consequence. Moreover, what is true of the impact of the Left on the Labour Right is also true of its impact on the Right in general, on issues ranging from civil

liberty to nuclear strategy, from industrial relations to educational policy. If the bid has been raised, it is more than anything else, the Left which has helped to raise it.

This, I think, suggests a perspective for the Left in the immediately relevant future. It is not a perspective which offers the promise of spectacular change within the Labour movement *now*. Mr. Gaitskell will not, it is pretty safe to predict, be deposed for some time to come; the present policies of the Labour Party will not be substantially reversed, whatever verbal concessions may be made to the mood of the activists; the Parliamentary Labour Party, always, as a body, a pliant instrument of orthodoxy, will not become a live and powerful opposition; and most trade union leaders will try to proceed on their traditional and traditionalist course. All this is something that has to be faced, lived with and worked within.

What it suggests, however, is that there is a crucially important job for the Left to do: in educating itself and helping to educate others into the promise and the conditions of socialism in the 1960's; in pushing back the frontiers of debate and action; in maintaining that continuous pressure which socialists can exercise as part of

their service, wherever in the Labour movement they may be situated, against all that is unprincipled and, in socialist terms, corrupt, about the policies and actions of the Labour Establishment, and not only at national level either; in the organisation of permanent protest, which is also permanent affirmation, against the evils and the inadequacies, the crimes and the absurdities of a society sick with the impulse to private appropriation.

The Left is not a sect of the virtuous, lost among a television-moronised multitude which has been finally brain-washed into commodity worship. Notwithstanding electoral appearances, there is, at a multitude of points, a deep unease about the character, ethos and future of this society, and an equally deep awareness that the orthodoxies both of Conservatism and of Labourism provide no answer to its tensions. Socialists can help to give substance, precision and drive to that unease and that awareness. In so doing, they will, in the perspective of tomorrow, lay the foundations for real advances the day after tomorrow. As the Labour Party's impulse, Labourism has now all but spent itself. But the battle for socialism has barely begun.

The Deference Voter

Ralph Samuel

A study of the working-class Tory

This article has been written on the basis of a preliminary survey in Clapham and Stevenage.

THERE ARE many people in the Labour Party who still believe that the “working class Tory voter” is a myth. The working class Tory has been treated as an isolated deviant, a fabricated figment projected both by the Conservative Central Office and the left wing extremists to embarrass the Party. For some years, the Party has been geared, at each election, to “getting out the Labour vote”—the safe assumption being that the social composition of Labour’s support is a fixed, immutable fact, and that the only barrier to an electoral victory was the “reluctance” of the working class to cast a vote.

This picture has never, in fact, been wholly true, and it is less true now than it has ever been. What has still to be analysed and discussed are the characteristic attitudes of the large minority of working people who, at the last election, recorded a Conservative vote.

“The Conservative Party is the gentleman’s Party. They’re the people who have got the money. I always vote for them.

I’m only a working man and they’re my guv’nors.”

The man who said this to me—a 61 year old plumber, living in a pre-war council flat in Clapham—might be thought untypical. He came from a country family—both he and his wife had been brought up in a Cotswold village—and the roots of his Conservatism could no doubt be traced back to the villager’s traditional deference to the local gentry. His work, too, may have been more than commonly deferential—much of his time had been spent in the buildings of Royalty, Government and the Academy. But his views were representative. They des-

cribe the main features of what might be called the ‘deference vote’.

“They’ve got the money, and the people with money are the people you look up to.”

These sentiments express the characteristic faith of the working class Tory. They are not survivals from a vanished past, nor do they appear to be declining. On the contrary. They were expressed as commonly and as emphatically by young voters in Stevenage—one of the newest industrial communities in Britain—as by the elderly in Clapham, an ageing inner London borough.

“With background and education, you naturally go to the top. I take my hats off to the Conservatives I recognise them as gentlemen. The Labour Party are only men.”

“The Labour Party are all against making too much money, and they don’t like the top classes. But I think you must have rich people to run the country.”

“I think the Conservatives are made for the job of government. They’re mostly men with money, and they’ve got more money sense. They understand it more. And there are the different universities and colleges they’ve gone to. It all helps, that sort of thing.”

These were some of the comments at Stevenage, where one third (31 per cent) of the seventy voters interviewed believed that political leaders should be drawn from families used to running the country.

The attitudes represented here are very deep-seated. Yet most commentators have ignored the significance of the deference vote and leave undiscussed the influences shaping it—the revival of the ruling class, the renewed power of business, the free-floating nationalism of Conservative Britain. They have looked at the

effects of prosperity rather than the facts of power. "Classlessness", affluence and individualism ("I'm all right, Jack"), and complacency are generally considered a sufficient explanation of the Conservatives' third term of office. But how far does complacency or "prosperity" go to explain the working class Tory vote?

"They Look After Us Now"

Clearly there are the complacent: "I'm all in favour of more for old people", said a plastic fitter, "so long as it doesn't fall back on us". Here can be seen a drift into a selfish individualism, which cuts away many of the more traditional attitudes towards the common provision of community services, etc. which were drawn upon in the creation of the Welfare State. But complacency and prosperity are often closely linked together; much more common was the belief that "everyone's more comfortable now".

Most people today *are* "more comfortable now" than they have ever been, even if they are not so well off or complacent as Conservative propaganda would have us suppose. There are, it is true, the "voiceless poor"—the submerged fifth, the aged, the injured, the unemployed and the sick: but they had been kept out of sight and mind too long to become, through Mr. Greenwood's first T.V. programme, a very real presence in the election campaign. In fact, one of the main effects of "prosperity" is not that, of itself, it makes working class people Tory, but that it blurs and distorts the picture which many people have of the country in which they live. Most people have in their minds a picture of the society constructed on the basis of their own lives and experiences. Labour placed a great deal of emphasis, in the closing stages of the campaign, on their plan for old age pensioners. But how urgent could this have seemed, for example, to the Stevenage housewife, who said, "There aren't any poor now. Just a few—in London?" For her, the poor had simply disappeared.

In Stevenage, of course, the prosperity is hardly surprising; it is a new town and a centre for two of the nation's most thriving industries—electronics and missiles. But it was in Clapham, where the prosperity is much less obvious, that people were most enthusiastic about it. "Education is very good, the children are really well cared for". "Working people are beginning to get some of the things they're entitled to". "People have never been so well off". "You don't know what it means to people like us to have a bath instead of a couple of curtains hung in the corner with two chairs behind it and a bowl". Naturally this influenced the election.

"There is a better class of living now and education has changed a lot. Young people just don't know what the old times were like. That's why so many of them changed."

"Labour have helped the working class a lot in the past, but we seem to be better off under the Conservatives than what we were under the Labour. They have done a lot for the working class."

All this is important, but it would be mistaken to conclude that the fortunes of the Conservatives depend upon

those of the economy, and to expect that the working class Tory will vanish, mechanically, with a downturn in the trade cycle, or—as Harold Wilson seems to suggest—with a change in the terms of trade. It is worth recalling that the two greatest Conservative triumphs of the century—the elections of 1931 and 1935—were won in face of massive unemployment and unexampled misery. Tories were steadily returned throughout the Thirties in some of the depressed towns of the North.

In the end, the Conservative support among working people depends, not upon income and employment statistics—important though these are—but upon the pattern of power that prevails and the image people hold of the nation and of themselves.

Since the election, far too much attention has been given to the supposedly "middle class" character of workers in the new industries and on the housing estates. They are said to have defected, at one and the same time, from class and Party.

The argument is plausible—but misleading. There are, of course, people on the move into the middle class: there always have been. Many of them vote Conservative, like Mrs. Richardson, a 35-year-old Clapham woman, who said:

"My father just worked; he didn't get anywhere. But my husband has got on. He's out to better himself. He's studied at night and that sort of thing. Now he has this job as a bank clerk. When you get out of the rut you feel that the Labour Party has not come along with you. You've changed, but Labour's where it was before."

Such people are saying something about the ageing, backward-looking image of the Labour Party, which is very important. They will, under present circumstances, always vote Tory as an expression of changing social status—though more so because of the image of the Labour Party than because of a deep conviction about the Tories. But the numbers are not substantially greater than they were in the past. A fair number of working class people do call themselves middle class. Sometimes this is to distinguish themselves from "the poor", and often they go on to describe themselves as "working men" "working class people". In both Clapham and Stevenage the majority of the Conservative's new voters were working class people. They described themselves as working class—"working people", "hard working class", "working class undoubtedly", definitely working class". It was *as working class people* this time, that they were supporting the Conservatives.

"I voted for them this time because the standard of living of the working class has gone up."

"They have done a lot for the working people. They've done more for us than what other Conservative governments have done. A few years ago I would have said they stood for themselves—making money and getting rich. But now they're certainly looking after us."

As well as those affected, in the way suggested earlier, by "post-war prosperity", and those who have voted Tory in the process of crossing over into the middle class, there are working class people, affected by neither fact, who are solid Conservative supporters. Who are they?

Nearly three quarters of the population is working class to judge by the Registrar General's classification—but Labour *has never* received more than a half of the total vote. Robert Mackenzie estimates that two fifths of the working class voted Conservative on October 8. This is a dramatic percentage, and although so little attention has been given to it on the Left, the Conservatives—busy since October 8 organising contracting-out among the unions—seem to know better. These working class Tories are often pictured as unorganised or ill-organised workers, with jobs, perhaps, in factories and workshops run on patriarchal lines, or shop workers and office employees, where they are peculiarly susceptible to the pressure of employers.

Perhaps working class Tories *are* more easily made in these kinds of occupations. But the fact remains that a strong, if minority, Tory support exists *traditionally* among working people. How have the Tories themselves conceived this support, and what is the relationship between Party ideology and Party support in the working class?

“They’re Born To Rule”

This relationship has not always been what it is today. In the early nineteenth century, the Tories—a landlord's Party at that time—were often anti-capitalist. It was a Tory, Richard Oastler, who led the Yorkshire textile workers in the fight for the Ten-Hour Day and the campaign against the New Poor Law. There were many working class radicals—notably O'Connor and Stephens the Chartist leaders—who saw in the Tories possible allies against the Whigs, the Benthamites and the Manchester manufacturers. It was in this context that Disraeli set out, for the first time, the ideology of working class Toryism. He called on the traditional aristocracy to become, once again, the leaders of the people and to end, through this alliance, the gulf which capitalism fixed between the “two nations”.

Disraeli's vision of ‘one nation’, each man in his order and degree, bound by ties of deference and obligation to the whole, has remained with the Conservative Party—Hailsham's picture of the ‘organic nation’ in *The Conservative Case* is the latest re-statement—but its content has been changed. Anti-capitalism, the original basis of working class Toryism, was discarded by the Conservatives when they became, later in the century, the united party of privilege and profit. Since Disraeli, the principal recipient of deference was business and the business class. The pretensions of the old elite were carried over to buttress the power of the new.

The relationship between the Conservative Party and the Tory working class vote has, therefore, been consciously re-defined since Disraeli's day. Today, the feudal and the bourgeois elements have been linked together. Today, the working class Tory believes *both* that “They’re born to rule, they were brought up to it”, *and* that “They’ve got the money, they know how to use it”.

It is unlikely, therefore, that the *majority* of working class Tories see voting Tory as a way of acquiring middle

class status, or as a means of bettering themselves in the eyes of their neighbours. The aim of the working class Tory is not so much to draw nearer to his rulers in social status, but *to acknowledge the distance between them and himself, to defer to them precisely because* “they were born to rule”. His Tory beliefs often include a lively sense of his own inferiority in matters of state and economy, together with a settled conviction that these are not proper matters for working people to decide. Ruling should be left to the ruling class.

“The Conservatives have got more idea of what they’re doing than the people who come up from the working class—the mines and such like. Working class people are not the sort to run the country, because I don’t think they understand it really. I’m sure I wouldn’t if I got up there.”

“It helps to have background. Leaders shouldn’t come from an ordinary working class family like myself. I know I wouldn’t know how to be a Prime Minister.”

The clearest statement of this deference view of politics came from Mr. Ashton, a Clapham warehouseman, who had voted Conservative all his life, and who described himself as “just an ordinary working man”.

“You need brains and money to run the country in an efficient way, and working class people can’t have that. The Conservatives are better suited to running the country. They’re better educated—I think there is nothing better than to hear a Public School man speak English—and they’ve had the experience. Unless you are a genius—which are very few and far between—I think the best men are those that are used to handling things like government. And that’s obviously not the working class. With their upbringing the Conservatives are used to handling money. They know how to use it. They don’t throw it away as the working man would.”

Views such as these were quoted as axioms—“Leadership is born in people”, “If a man has ability he will probably inherit it”, “The ones who have jumped up tend to be cocky”. They were thought by some to be as relevant to industry as to government—“The born and bred ones are the best for running things”, said a worker at English Electric when asked about leaders of industry. Nor were such views confined to Conservative voters: “I prefer to have a man who’s been trained as a gentleman”; said Mr. Elton, a Labour voter, (“they look after the working man better”) and Stevenage engineer “the can handle men better”. These views about industry naturally led them to give political support to those who by birth and breeding, seemed obviously best suited to be the permanent political elite.

“The Conservatives have had more experience over the centuries. It’s in the blood for them, running the country. There’s more family background in the Conservatives, more of the aristocratic families, more heritage.”

“They’re gentlemen born. I think they’re made for that sort of job.”

“These old political families have the political education, don’t they?”

One can see from these quotations that what we have called “the deference vote” is not a new or marginal thing. It is, in its way, a traditional vote, anchored in the very structure of the society today, affected by social changes as well as by political events over a long period

of time. Since the Nineteenth century, it has been shaped by the growing power of business, and, since the War, supported by the renewed ascendancy and confidence of the ruling class, fostered by the Conservative success in presenting themselves again as the more national Party, coloured by the free floating nationalism which has emerged in the years since Suez.

If the Left has not noticed the importance of the deference vote, it is because all attention has been focussed on the new Conservatism. A great deal has been said about the Conservative's changing 'image': Mr. Butler's 'backroom boys' and, latterly, the Bow group, are thought to have been the shaping influence on post-war Tory thinking; Mr. Amory boiling his eggs for breakfast, Mr. Marples riding his bicycle into Palace Yard, these are considered the characteristic, almost plebeian representatives of the new-style Tory Party.

But the Conservatives retain another, equally compelling image—that of the traditional governing class. It is significant that the Party has chosen to project its image through the persona of Mr. Macmillan rather than Mr. Butler. Labour propagandists who make fun of his raffish and downbeat Edwardianism miss the point of it all. A governing class, if it is to be taken seriously, must *look* like the governing class. Its leader must always appear in the confident stance of his class, arrogant on occasion, but always unruffled. "Unflappability" is the essence of the ruling class posture, and Macmillan's well-publicised grouse-shooting holiday—just before the announcement of the election date—was perhaps a more carefully-planned exercise than people supposed. Certainly Brigadier John Hinchliffe—the man who made the Tories look sincere on television—knew what he was doing when he took viewers on that little trip to Chequers. How comfortable the ministers looked, ensconced in the seat of Authority! How *obviously* at home! Even some staunch Labour voters succumbed. Mrs. Walden, for instance, a 61-year-old woman who had moved to Stevenage to live near her children; she had voted Labour for 32 years—"we're all Labour people in my family"—but she admitted to feeling a little doubtful in this election, and she had been greatly impressed by Macmillan on TV:

"He looks what he is—very aristocratic. He's had a jolly good education, and he's very wealthy. I've always thought that showed itself. It's a good thing in a Prime Minister."

Deference may be offered at a greater distance than it used to be—watching the parlour television rather than standing at the country house gates—but it is none the less important.

Perhaps the most remarkable feature of the Conservative achievement is that they seldom refer to the upper classes, and never argue the case for an elite-run society. Occasionally their true feelings come through—but they never actually proclaim that they *are* the governing class. The Conservative canvasser who was heard to say in the early hours of October 9, "of course the class war is over; we've won it" was not speaking with Central

Office sanction. Macmillan's remark was intended to show, rather than we have at last achieved "one nation", an open society in which abundant opportunities are available to all. This kind of propaganda has been remarkably successful, and the active belief in the Conservative "opportunity state" accounts for many of their votes. Seventy-two per cent of the Stevenage voters interviewed believed that there were equal opportunities now. "Everybody's more the same now" "It's up to the individual whether he wants to get on or not". "If you try hard enough you can get to the top. There are plenty of opportunities". "People are pretty well equal these days". Yet the people who said this were often those who voted Conservative because "They're the guv'nors", "they've got the money."

There is no more powerful argument for voting in the status quo than the fact that it is *there*. Seldom has it looked more securely established than it does today. The ethos of business now directly affects every sphere of national life. In the fifties, the confidence of capitalism has been steadily reconstructed, and its resurgence has gone largely unchallenged. The triumphs of businessmen make up the news of the day, their social life invades the gossip columns, their patronage hangs over the arts, their openings in business seduce the intellectuals. Fewer people see anything intrinsically wrong with the sway of private competition and the mechanism of the "free" market: more people regard "spending the taxpayer's money" as a kind of criminal folly or public sin.

"They've Got The Money"

In the big boom of the fifties, the ruling class has secured its power in the business corporations. And the more confident and powerful it looks, the more there will be people, prepared to yield or defer to its established sway. This is not to be interpreted narrowly—in terms of direct propaganda, such as the Steel Nationalisation Campaign—but more generally in terms of the atmosphere within which political attitudes or allegiances are formed. It is the overwhelming *presence* of capitalism which generates the deference vote.

"Isn't it better to work for a person that you know had got the money, than for a person that has a scheme, but won't be able to pay you at the end of the week. You can't beat the Conservatives to run the country. They've got the money, and if they didn't have it they would know where to find it. I'm a working man, and I would sooner work for a guv'nor who was Conservative than for a Labour man. Labour haven't got the money, and they don't know where they would get it."

"Labour's better for us, for the working class, but I think the Conservatives are better for the country as a whole."

"You must have the money and the Conservative people have got the money. If they didn't get in, they would hold the money back. They might circulate some, of course—just to make it look good—but not the same amount as before, because they're all for themselves really."

"The Conservatives do represent big business, and I think that makes them the more efficient Party. Running the country, after all, is just the biggest business of them all."

It is, then, *because* the Tory Party is the Party of business and breeding that the Conservatives win a good deal of their working class support. They present themselves to the country covered—in Lord Hailsham's phrase—with the "mystique of a traditional authority". Their appeal as the more *national* of the Parties—one of their most powerful self-images—is closely linked to this.

"Labour is good for the working class, the Conservatives are more for Britain, more for the good of the country as a whole."

"The Conservatives do more for us as a whole. They keep us together much more overseas. They have that flair, they're much more diplomatic. We've had much more prestige in the world with the Conservatives in power."

These are judgments of the traditional kind. They can be contested and debated, for they are rational arguments, even if they are wrong. But the 'national' appeal of the Conservatives is being overtaken and overlaid with something much more dangerous—the emotional appeal of thwarted imperialist sentiment. There is in the country today a mood of injured national pride—a free-floating jingoism—which the Conservatives have done so much to create by their policies in Suez, Cyprus and Africa.

"The Conservatives are for the Empire more than what the Labour are. I don't think we should let other people trample on us the way they do. I think we should be firm and not bow down to little dictators like Nasser. These little countries, they seem to throw us out when they feel like it. At one time they wouldn't have dared. First there was India went, and then there was Cyprus—all the trouble there was there. Now there are all these foreigners coming into the country. You've got these Indians coming over. If we were still governing India, they wouldn't be in such a state they'd need to come. I think everybody ought to stop in their own country."

This new model nationalism is only enthusiastically taken up by a minority of Conservative voters. But it has infected the entire Conservative side of the Suez debate. In the nationalism of previous generations Britain was cast in the role of "Jack the Giant Killer" (again the phrase is Hailsham's). Today nationalist sentiment is born of frustration and directed towards the little country. "It seemed a shame for the Egyptians to throw mud in British faces". "We shouldn't be trodden on by these sorts of people". It underpinned the qualified approval which a majority of those interviewed at Stevenage gave to the invasion of the Canal.

"Someone had to make a stand. We paid for the rights. Let these people see Britain is no longer a country to be trodden on. I hate that Barbara Castle, standing on her hindlegs and squawking."

"I think they should have carried on with it. We've been pushed around so much; we've always appeased people and its got us nowhere. That wasn't how we got our colonies. But nowadays the whole idea seems to be 'they want that, let them have it'—anything for a quiet life. Well I don't think that's right. You can't just go on and keep giving in. You've got to make a stand sometime. Labour's always been for appeasement—look at the way they helped that other bloke when he came back with 'peace in our time'—but its never been any good."

This article has attempted a 'model' of the Tory deference voters. It describes some of the common characteristics of the working class Tory. It is necessary at this point to qualify. Many working class Tories are

not deference voters. If some supported the Conservatives because "they've got the money", there were others who did not. And as we saw earlier, the pure deference voter retained many basic working class and Labour beliefs. "The idle rich", "the nobs", "all out for themselves", were among the things they said about the rich and the upper classes. Mrs. Edwards of Clapham, when asked what she would most liked changed said:

"There's something I don't believe in—that's Kings and Queens. This country would be a lot wealthier today if it was run with a President. It's not just them, it's all their relatives. We have to support them all. They could make Buckingham Palace like the Tower of London."

There have always been working class 'deference' voters. If their number has increased, it is partly because of what has happened to Britain in the Fifties. The Conservative appeal has been strengthened by the visible power of business, the celebration of business values, and the mood of frustrated nationalism. In the next five years the Conservatives are likely to appear even more 'national', for they will be shaping the nation in their own image. The business system will look more powerful than ever, the class system maintain its sway. Must we then conclude that the Conservatives will rule for ever? Will the number of working class Tories go on increasing?

The answer is less pessimistic than this article may at times seemed to have suggested. If the Conservatives have been gaining working class support it has been, in considerable part, by default. Seldom has the incapacity of the governing class to govern been more apparent than at the time of Suez. Yet Labour, after a one month campaign, preferred not to affront the prevalent jingoist sentiment. As a result many of those who were doubtful and shocked at the time of Suez were permitted to come round to support of the invasion. The Labour Party itself, between elections, scarcely touches the lives of many working class people: "they seem so distant nowadays", said a Stevenage woman, "you never see them except at elections". There is an alternative democratic view of the nation, but it has never been communicated with any force to many people. But the Conservative supremacy can only be contested if the Labour movement suggest itself as an equally imposing alternative presence to that of the governing class, with an equally compelling, but socialist view of the way this country can live.

This Article

is based on a post-election survey of 3 wards of Stevenage New Town. A random sample of 91 names (1½% of voters in the wards) was made from the electoral register. Of the 70 interviewed, 30 voted Labour, 7 Liberal, 29 Conservative. Of the 36 Liberals and Conservative voters, 19 voted Labour at one or more of the previous four elections. Of the 29 Conservatives, 20 were working class, 16 were "deference voters". Of the 18 working class voters who described themselves as middle class, 10 voted Labour, 3 Liberal, 5 Conservative. The article also draws on 33 interviews taken in Clapham by a group led by George Clark. Our thanks are due to Stephen Hatch, Penny Balchin, Dick Leonard, Richard Pryke, Thea Vigne and Kathy Burton.

The Man From The Labour

Mervyn Jones

WHAT IS it, after the Labour Party's third defeat that has to be put to rights? Some say that it is only the electoral machinery or the propaganda, but these answers are patently superficial. Others point to programme and policy, and they are right enough. Even so, to my mind this is not the root of the matter. It is high time to talk about the nature of the Labour Party.

Consider the party, then, as it has been at its best: that is, in certain strongholds during the years after 1945. For those joined in the fraternity of membership, and for many others who identified themselves with it, it represented not only the hope but in some measure the reality of an alternative way of life, existing alongside and continually challenging the old order. The Labour rooms served both as community centre and as advice bureau. Each time a problem was attacked or a grievance remedied, on however small or however large a scale, a window was opened upon a new view of human and social relations. The thinking of the community was shaped, not so much by the centralised diffusion of ideas through press and radio as by a myriad individual contacts and influences. There was a Labour attitude to every aspect of life—to the functioning of the economy, to the welfare services and education, to the administration of justice and the relations of the citizen to authority, to the provision and choice of entertainment, to social habits, even to personal morality. Both directly and indirectly (that is, through local government and various community bodies) these attitudes could often be carried into action with decisive effect.

Labour, in fact, was a mass party, and the only one we have ever had in this country, for the Conservative Party works differently. True, it has a superb political machine, a powerful say in local government, and a membership system that meshes with the social life of those who can feel at home in it. But it does not really seek a place in the general community, except a place apart: the place of power. It asks the millions to trust it, not to identify themselves with it. It eschews the social completeness, the emotional impetus, and the comprehensive though simple ideology that are essential to the mass party, whether of the Right or the Left. (Lord Hailsham's Penguin book tells you why). It is worth remarking, however, that the mass party is a phenomenon characteristic of the post-war decade all over Western Europe. The Labour Party was not alone or even pre-eminent in creating social bonds of a strength and suppleness comparable only to those of religion. In broad outline, my description fits the French and Italian Communists, and in the case of the latter also their great antagonist, Christian Democracy.

That, as I say, was ten years ago and more. Today, each of these mass parties is a shadow of its old self.

Voting strength and membership may be more or less maintained (in some cases, less rather than more), but only as the paper strength of a church in an irreligious country. The party has become a party in the textbook sense—confined, I mean, to the narrow arena of Parliament and of "politics" as the word is commonly used. The dynamic of ideas, and the holding of an integral place in the community, are equally attenuated.

The decline of the mass party is, of course, closely connected with the other great development of the 1950's in our part of the world: the resurgence of capitalism and its unexpected ability to satisfy at least a limited range of human demands. That it has been unexpected, none should wonder. The "recovery" decade followed a long period, from the crash of 1929 to the Marshall Plan, during which European capitalism was discredited in the eyes of millions and appeared plainly incapable of functioning even by its own standards and in its own way. It was to parties and movements that these millions turned to solve even the most immediate and personal of problems: the need for a job, a home, the next meal. Sometimes they turned to the Left, sometimes to fascism or a party of pseudo-fascist demagogues, sometimes to a spiritual soup-kitchen like Italian Christian Democracy. The cause, however, was the same.

Now things are different. Increasingly, and most markedly among younger people, there is a tendency to imagine that problems can be solved without organised social action. What the individual cannot do for himself he entrusts, not to a party in which he can be (however humbly) a participant, but to a remote figure of the kind typified by General de Gaulle. Between the man in the street and the rulers of our time—de Gaulle, Adenauer, Macmillan—there is not even the distorted and hysterical parody of comradeship that existed between Hitler and his followers. The call is for a man who, to use the nauseatingly apt phrase that has crept into the glossary of modern clichés, "presides over our destinies." The duty of this arbiter (to use de Gaulle's chosen word) is to confer sanctity and a guarantee of continuity on the accepted social institutions—the capitalist economic machine, the Army and police, the hierarchy of officialdom.

Because this general background has been insufficiently analysed, and because Labour has been our only mass party, its decline has been regarded merely as a series of electoral defeats inflicted by one party on its rival.

Another false trail has been laid by the power of the party machines, whose arrogance and intolerance occasion so many cries of anguish. The truth is that they are content to wield this power within a limited sphere,

the sphere of "politics" in its narrower sense. Dissident party members, Parliament, and local Councils are the victims, and attention concentrates on their torments rather than on the attitude of a vast mass of amused, disgusted, bored, but in any case essentially detached spectators. Intolerance does not belie, but illustrates, the decline of the mass party. Party discipline in the French National Assembly is actually tighter now than under the Fourth Republic, although neither the parties nor the Assembly itself matter any more; the French, once again, perform a labour of clarification by carrying logic to the point of absurdity.

The Labour Party, having lost both self-confidence and direction, exhibits all the symptoms of the cornered tyrant. There is intolerance of unwelcome home truths:

"If thou speak'st false.

Upon the next tree shalt thou hang alive."

There is the recourse to flamboyant propaganda:

"Hang out our banners on the outward walls!"

There is the complaint that the enemy has no real right to his converts:

"Were they not forced with those that should be ours,

We might have met them dareful, beard to beard,
And beat them backward home."

And there is the fiat denial of reality:

"Bring me no more reports; let them fly all!"

At this stage, we remember, Macbeth was in a pretty bad way. The more he was feared within his castle, the less he was feared anywhere else.

Decline of a Mass Party

I am not suggesting that the decline of the mass party in general, and of the Labour Party in particular, is an inevitable process to which we must simply resign ourselves. Nevertheless, it has real causes which will continue to operate; it is by this time far advanced; and to reverse or even to halt it will require great exertions and radical changes in thought and action. There was truth in Mr. Grossman's sad reflection that Labour these days has to run fast to keep in the same place. (There is, alas, no energetic Red Queen to tug this Alice along). The most useful first step is to analyse, as a prelude to attacking, each aspect of the decline.

The steady erosion of the Labour vote, the loss of 25 or so seats at each election, has received sufficient comment. Scratching a little deeper, we find a less publicised and sensational, but real, fall in individual membership of the party. One would not expect this to be either sudden or large in statistical terms, because to leave the party (or even to cease to pay the political levy) calls for a more or less public decision. You have to tell the dues-collector that you are not paying any more, and he might even ask why.

The year 1959 began with a propaganda campaign hopefully entitled "Into Action." The party leaders hustled round the country addressing public meetings and giving private pep-talks to the members, as well as

conducting the curious exercise known as "seeing for oneself." A pamphlet whose glossy brightness filled every breast in Transport House with delight was distributed in hundreds of thousands. What is more to the point in the present context, most of the copies did not go to the general public but to party members. Everywhere, efforts were made to tune up the organisation and solidify the ranks in readiness for the approaching election. And in this year—from October 1958 to October 1959, to be accurate—it has now been revealed that individual membership fell by 25,000.

Scratching deeper again, one must next record an equally gradual, yet equally real, decline in the number of people whose membership is in any sense active. I will instance my own ward only because I know that it is typical of many. I live in a safe Labour constituency—that is, even if present trends are projected it will not be won by the Tories until 1968. The party, which means the active handful, is left-wing. My ward regularly returns Labour councillors. The vote is drawn from a massive agglomeration of Council flats, from streets of old working-class cottages where the virtues of neighbourliness and solidarity are supposed to prevail, and from a few intellectuals. At this writing there are 300 party members. In my four years' experience, the average attendance at ward meetings is six. The peak, on one occasion, was fifteen, but several meetings have been cancelled because only one or two people turned up. This situation is generally accepted. In fact, I cannot recall a discussion on how to remedy it.

I know that attendance at meetings is not the only index of the party's health. Another is the staffing of the organisation, the finding of enough people to do the bare minimum of regular work. On this the steady advance of the paid canvasser, the dues-collector working on commission, and the "football swindle" is sufficient comment. It is also argued that there are members who are normally inactive so far as the organisation goes, but who defend the Labour case among their friends and workmates and also turn out at times of crisis or for elections. The truth is that, while in some places these people exist in sizable numbers, in other places there are none, or hardly any. Many of the volunteers who came into the committee rooms in the recent election were strangers, impelled either by inner conviction or by contact with other movements, usually the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. Often they neither belonged to the party beforehand nor have joined since. If they did belong, often they were neither active in party affairs beforehand nor have become active since.

The root of the matter is the attitude of the inactive members to the party, for this is what reveals the party's place (or lack of a place) in the community. This is hard to document, but I am sure it is broadly true that thousands of people who are still on the books have ceased to be—and to feel themselves to be—members in any real sense. They are subscribers, and not very willing ones at that. One reason why we have paid

dues-collectors is that the job of collecting has ceased to be what it once was, the maintenance of a living connection between people and an organisation with a place in their lives. A familiar scene illustrates what I mean by the decline of the mass party as described earlier in this article. The dues-collector knocks; the door is opened by a child or a youngster; he explains his business. There is a call of: "Dad! It's the man from the Labour." Follows a distant sound of grumbling and a search for the right coins. At least, unlike that other nuisance, "the man to read the meter," the Labour man need not enter the house. He is more on a footing with "the H.P. man." Nor does Dad or Mum care to emerge and talk with him. After the necessary interval, the tribute is produced, and that is that.

The remoteness of the Labour Party is paralleled by the remoteness of the Labour group on the Council, and still more of the Council itself when it has a Labour majority. (I don't suggest that things are better when the Tories are in control, but that is cold comfort.) There are three aspects of this. One is the prevalence of bumbledom, petty tyranny, lack of explanation of Council decisions, and the imposition of rules that look reasonable at the Town Hall but are unjust or unworkable, or both, in practice. Secondly, the habit of pure administration. The policies decided upon are honestly meant, and sometimes can be described as Socialist in a certain measure. They are proceeded with, however, regardless of the welcome or the protest that they evoke. Initiative from the people themselves is regarded as a nuisance, evidently the outcome of mere ignorance, and likely merely to spoil a neat plan or involve extra work. As in national politics, so increasingly in local politics democracy becomes limited to the periodic exercise of the vote. Thirdly, there is the resigned acceptance of decisions made by the Tory Government which affect local affairs. When rents are raised, Council house-building axed, or a day nursery closed, the responsibility is normally Governmental. Rare indeed is the Labour Council that will even consider defying such decisions in the direct way chosen by Lansbury at Poplar. Almost as rare is the Council that will find a legal way to nullify Government policy, although the St. Pancras rent scheme showed that this is by no means impossible. Rare, even, is the Council that frees itself of the blame and publicly explains the real authorship of the policies it has to implement, except at the ensuing election, when it is too late.

Since October 8, it has become a cliché to say that you cannot win an election in three weeks. What is usually meant, however, is that the Opposition must use the preceding years to work out the right policies and popularise them. This is both true and important, but it is not the end of the matter. The duty of an Opposition is to oppose, not merely to prepare for the next election. Its reputation in the eyes of the people (let us occasionally call them that, not always "the electorate") depends on what it does about issues that arise all along, whether these are likely to be election issues or not.

Between the last two general elections the Labour Party, nationally, staged two campaigns—against Suez and against the Rent Act. Not only was this not enough, but both had serious limitations. They were almost wholly negative; little attempt was made to link the former with Labour's peace policy or the latter with the municipalisation of housing. They were curtailed because of doubts whether they would pay off, the Suez campaign when working-class jingoism was discovered and caused an agonising reappraisal, the Rent Act campaign when the necessary number of evictions failed to materialise. And both campaigns, as the curtailment made clear and as had been widely suspected from the start, were essentially vote-winning exercises. So strong was this impression that the Tories gained considerable credit from actions that could be represented as "unpopular but right."

In addition, there was parliamentary activity on various issues. It was most vigorous and most principled in relation to Africa and to pensions; in other instances it was both despicable and ludicrous. The trouble was that the Labour leaders have forgotten, or never knew, the difference between parliamentary activity and campaigning. Stuart Hall has pointed out, as a prize example, the calendar month that elapsed before Labour called a public meeting on Nyasaland—long after the independent Left, the Liberals, and the Communists.

But there was something more fundamental wrong with the Suez and Rent Act campaigns. At no point were they connected with a consistent critique of the capitalist system, though it would be hard to think of two Tory actions proceeding more obviously and dramatically from the nature of that system. The most that Labour achieved was to draw a sorrowing picture of the Tories as "failing to understand the modern world", or as "unable to cope with real housing needs", as if Labour's function were to educate the Tories and not the people. This enormous vacuum accounts for all that is fragmentary, inconsistent, and unconvincing in Labour propaganda about matters great and small.

When I was a parliamentary candidate, a family brewery in the constituency was bought up by a big national concern. Ten employees, who lived in tied houses belonging to the old firm, found their tenancies ended by its disappearance and were evicted. I made a speech about it. My agent thought it was a good stunt; the Tories thought it was outrageous. The brewing combine made a statement to the effect that its action was perfectly legal and what any business would have done in the circumstances. I was happy to concede this, because it made my point, namely that this kind of thing goes with the capitalist system. I never succeeded in explaining this to my supporters, still less to the voters.

This tiny example demonstrates (I hope without further explanation to *New Left Review* readers) the political weakness at the heart of the Labour Party. In the last analysis, the matter is simple. The *raison d'être* of a mass party is a thorough-going view of society. This leads either to a militant defence of the existing society

(Christendom, the free world, or whatever they call it); or to the nihilistic onslaught that we call fascism; or to Socialism expressed in thought and action. And Socialism is a total rejection of the practice and values of the existing society, combined with a comprehensive advocacy of a new society with new values and new institutions.

There is the question. It has to do with the Labour Party's ability to confront a capitalism capable of success in its own terms. It has to do, very precisely, with the next election. It has to do with the social and moral leadership of a generation. It has to do with the future of Socialism as an idea and as a movement. And it has to do with the survival of the Labour Party.

C.N.D. After The Election I

Frank Allaun

"WHAT SHOULD we do now?" asked the secretary of a live Lancashire group of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament.

"We've held a public meeting. We've been to see our M.P. We addressed five trade union branches. Now we feel at a loss to know what to do next."

To which my reply was—and is: "Keep on as you are doing. You are succeeding far better than you realise."

It is less than two years since the CND held its first public meeting in Central London on a cold February night in 1958. Yet look at the movement today, with its 350 active groups. Think of the two Aldermaston marches, the greatest demonstrations in Britain since the Hunger Marches.

Then there is the tremendous impact on the Labour movement, the majority vote at the T.U.C. for ending U.S. missile bases in Britain and the huge minority vote for stopping H-bomb manufacture unilaterally, and the 137 resolutions on the agenda of the postponed Labour Party conference urging unilateral action.

Remember, too, that what we are seeking is no small thing. To ask that a nation should give up the most powerful weapon in its arsenal is almost a revolutionary demand. Frankly, I believe that the CND has made astonishing progress—far greater than I ever expected in so short a time.

I hope that no *New Left Review* readers will be misled by the reopening of the Geneva talks on stopping tests or by the prospect of a Summit conference, into thinking that the campaign is now less urgent. Naturally there are few things I'd rather see than the success of these conferences. But I am pessimistic.

Ever since 1922, Disarmament Conferences have come—and gone—without reaching agreement. More recently the UN Disarmament Sub-Committee—Britain, America, France, Canada and Russia—has met in London. They held 173 sessions, and failed to agree on a single point! The Geneva talks started in the autumn of 1958 and are still without a successful conclusion.

Why? Because suspicion between the Governments is so great that they are not really seeking agreement so much as an excuse by which they can blame their "enemies" for the breakdown of the talks or else some formula which will give them an advantage in arms at

the expense of their rivals. They have never reached agreement in this way and I fear they never will.

Such a breakdown may occur before long. In which case the alternative paths will become even more stark and clear: one Government having the courage and sanity to cut the vicious circle or else the acceleration of the arms race.

Even *limited* nuclear action, e.g. unilateral stopping of all tests immediately, should be welcomed. For the first step is always the most difficult. If Britain declared she were ending her tests forever it would, I believe, force the hands of America and Russia to do the same. This, in turn, would create the atmosphere in which agreement to go further along this road *did* become possible.

Make no mistake, the CND is going to be very much in the news in future.

I feel that the Campaign should be directed against the Government and its policy. It's no use appealing to arms workers to give up their jobs. That only diverts attention from the real guilty men.

The result of the General Election hasn't really altered the situation. All it means is that whereas the Conservatives had a majority of 60 they now have a majority of 100. We're not much worse off.

I regret to say there is little chance of converting Conservative M.P's. I have listened to them carefully inside the House of Commons. There is not one I can name who will publicly support unilateral nuclear disarmament. (This applies to Conservative candidates too. Not a single Tory candidate said "yes" to the CND questionnaire on the eve of the election). The Government will only respond to pressure.

In the course of the struggle against the Government's policy we shall be educating the public and simultaneously influencing the Labour Party. And this is what matters most. Our main hope is to convert Labour—partly by the CND activity challenge to Whitehall; partly by CND members using the rights they possess to fight for their point of view inside the Constituency Labour Parties and the trade unions.

I have referred earlier to some sensational changes in this direction which have already taken place. If the T&GWU can vote as they did by 700 to 50, why not the AEU, the NUM and the NUR? The Labour Party is ultimately a democratic organisation. You do not

normally change the policy of a big organisation overnight. Provided however, sufficient numbers of workers want a thing badly and determinedly enough, they can get it. I estimate in about 18 months from now.

What an impetus that will give to the Campaign! And what an impetus it will give to the Labour Party too! We talk about the apathy of youth. Youth are not interested in such questions as municipal sewerage. They can be moved by great issues—such as the Bomb. There were more young people on the Aldermaston marches than there are in the whole of the Labour Party youth sections in Britain. Let the Labour Party adopt the courageous CND policy and they'll inherit its youth following as well.

I conclude by returnin' got the opening question. I can understand the fear that the CND, having reached a certain height, may, like other movements, peter out. I don't think that will happen. As long as the threat of nuclear war lasts so long will the Campaign continue to grow. For what is almost unconsciously manifesting itself is the instinct of the human species to avoid extinction.

There were some doubts about the second Aldermaston march. Might it not prove an anti-climax to the first, and thus mark the decline of the movement? In fact it was more than twice as big. I hope there will be another Aldermaston and that it will show we have doubled in strength once again.

C.N.D. After The Election II

Christopher Farley

IT IS a new situation for the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. The General Election marked the end of the Campaign's first phase of life, and further meaningful existence depends considerably on whether the new situation is recognised as such. In less than two years the emphasis in the CND has changed markedly from that of a moral and anti-political movement to that of a pressure group on the Labour Party. One doesn't easily forget the applause in the Central Hall in February 1958 for A. J. P. Taylor's denunciation of the politicians. "Cynical references to the Labour Party," J. P. W. Mallalieu observed in that week's *New Statesman*, "were applauded as heartily as references to the Tories." By contrast, a speech a few weeks later from Frank Allaun at the close of the first day of the Aldermaston march showed how far some people had anticipated the mood of the Campaign. His invitation to marchers to "come on in" and join the Labour and trades union movements met with a coldness bordering on contempt. But all that was long ago. From then until the Election, the CND became increasingly concerned with the Labour Party. The aim was to "convert" the Party and return a Labour Government, preferably in that order but not necessarily so. Many rank-and-filers believed that the arrival of a Labour Government would be half the Campaign's victory won. Well before October 1959 the CND was seeking first the kingdom of Labour in the hope that all Campaign things would be added unto it in office. Indeed, those who dared to suggest that Campaigners should vote for their own policy and not that of the Party received negligible support and much abuse.

We now have continued Tory rule, probably for another five years. This has been a serious defeat for Labour—the fourth consecutive set-back since 1950—and its significance has yet to be appreciated in some quarters of both the CND and the Party. There has also been a series of defeats for the Campaign at the

hands of the Party; the cynical Labour "peace" campaign rushed forward after the first Aldermaston march (one Strachey pamphlet, two meetings, silence); the phoney "non-nuclear club" proposals when there was a hint of revolt in the unions; and the sickening recall conference of the National Union of General and Municipal Workers after it had spoken out of turn. All these kicks in the Campaign's teeth indicate that the dessicated calculating machine and his colleagues that control the Party are more than gentlemen—they are ruthless.

They are also spineless. In the language of *The Times*' Political Correspondent, the result of the Parliamentary Party's ballot, announced on November 5,

"has given to Mr. Gaitskell a Shadow Cabinet that neatly balances intellectuals and trade unionists and contains no Left-wing extremist. It is a Shadow Cabinet with most of its weight in the centre of the Party."

In other words the Parliamentary Party will continue to make very little use of the many occasions, particularly in foreign affairs, on which the Government acts monstrously. There is no reason to suppose from this sort of Shadow Cabinet that the Parliamentary Opposition will shake the Tories out of power—or their nuclear stance—in the coming five years.

Considerations such as these raise crucial and immediate questions for the CND, and though nobody has all the answers it is surely absurd if some Campaigners are not even trying to locate the right questions. It will be a very different nuclear world in five years' time, even if the arms race has not come to fruition. The Bombs will have spread, the tactical weapons will be shared out and installed and the latest obsolete weapons will be coming off the production lines. What do we want the CND to do meanwhile? "Keep on as you are doing"? Is it going to be a Campaign solely "directed against the Government" (which inherited Labour's

arms programme) or do we want a break with authoritarian politics? If we believe that everyone who co-operates with these policies is partly responsible, are we willing to explore the new politics that this presumes? One cannot help wondering, incidentally, what the only-the-Government-is-guilty school would have pronounced as judges at the Nuremburg trials. If we all have a responsibility, what about the CND men in Parliament? Are they to continue as a safe minority in the Labour Party, tolerated because they never table their own programme and vote for it? If the CND is asking Britain to lead whilst its own men in the House have shown consistently that they are not prepared to do so, will people think us serious when we say that the world is in imminent danger? The Tories, moreover, are not the only Party that "will only respond to pressure."

There are also wider questions about NATO, the British economy and the future of warfare, all of which need serious thought. We need to consider too the very basis of our campaigning. We have a rational case against nuclear weapons which has been well put by the

Controller of Munitions, Lieutenant-General Sir John Cowley:

"Unless we bring the nuclear deterrent into play we are bound to be beaten, and if we do bring it into play we are bound to commit suicide."

Clearly it is not a reasonable world, and decisions are not taken solely on such a basis. What now is needed outside the realm of reason? In the nuclear problem, can we reasonably hope for progress prompted by crisis? If we cannot, what attitude can we adopt to the processes and machinery of liberal democracy in a world on the brink of a disaster that we cannot comprehend?

But, more immediately, those of us who believe that serious politics today begin with the Bomb must ask ourselves if, after all the deception and manipulations, we want a CND led by Messrs. Gaitskell and Bevan. Perhaps the greatest weakness of the Victory for Socialism approach is the belief that the Party can somehow slide out of one policy into a radically different and contradictory one. It would be a useful start if we affirmed that we are working for a new Left.

Notting Hill Hustings

Michael Kullmann

A CONVENIENT way of describing the North Kensington electorate is to think of people living in towns as falling under three broad heads: A's living in beautiful homes, nice houses and posh flats; B's living in council flats, housing estates and generally in "semi-detached"; and C's living in dilapidated mansions, grim tenements and slums. Half the people in North Kensington are C's, a third are A's, the rest B's. Geographically the A's live to the South, and with their Tory neighbours of South Kensington—the safest Tory seat outside Ulster—share permanent control of the Council of the Royal Borough. Hence the housing crisis and the paucity of B's. What slum clearance there has been dates mostly from the 'thirties, and what 'B' housing has been provided since the war has been mostly at high rents. Worse than this is the fact that the A's of North Kensington hardly think of themselves as living in what the journalists call 'Notting Hill'—the crisis area—at all. 'Notting Hill', where the C's live, lies further North—down towards the Gas Works, the main line out of Paddington and the sinister Grand Union Canal. Of the C's a thousand or so are Irish, a couple of thousand coloured immigrants and a handful of them prostitutes. Some hundred or so coloured immigrants are friendly with the prostitutes. As the majority of C's strive to become B's and there is little hope of this within the area under a Tory Council and a Tory Government, Notting Hill is an area of high mobility. A doctor friend of mine reports a 10 per cent turnover in his list due to change of address. Structurally

the slums of 'Notting Hill' are not as bad as some, but conditions have got worse as a result of landlordism, overcrowding and vice. The three go together and form a vicious circle since coloured immigrants and prostitutes are by far the most profitable slum tenants. Politically North Kensington is in principle a safe Labour seat in a permanently Tory Royal Borough. But it became a focal point of political interest as a result of Mosley's candidature.

Of the four candidates, Mosley was the most experienced politician. With the entire resources of the fascist Union Movement, and its front—the White Defence League—some sixty agitators at his disposal, he had spent over a year at Notting Hill engineering a fascist renaissance. It was he who held the largest number and the best attended meetings. It was he who used the most dynamic campaign techniques. It was he alone who managed to arouse the enthusiasm of teen-agers. Day in, day out throughout the campaign one saw as though in a flashback nightmare, the birth of fascism in miniature. One meeting I shall not forget, held down a dingy alley—a row of slums to left and right, people leaning from the windows, the loudspeaker van booming in the dark clearing a great area at the centre by the pressure of its sound, behind the van a boarded building site from which, in the gathering tension of the crowd, one half hoped a band of communists might surge to bring the wheel of history full circle to the past. First spoke Mosley's lieutenant, Geoffrey Hamm, a fine orator,

ranting, rhythmical and strong . . . "and so we went to dear old (Tory) Lady Huggin's home . . . she was out . . . so we asked the porter how many Negroes live in this house and he said. 'One, the night porter' . . . How many Negroes has she got on her back? One. How many Negroes have you got on your back? Seven or eight thousand." And then to cries of "Mosley!" "Mosley!" came the leader himself. The mean and twisted looking wrecks who form the Union Movement moved to the front. Their cry was echoed by a band of teen-agers standing on a lorry to the right who cheered and yelled like some ghastly jury of the young. At first he spoke in measured accents of the faults of successive Labour and Tory governments, of housing, of conditions, using a smokescreen of reason to build up to a wave of hate against the scapegoats. Not the Jews this time, nor the Irish—indeed there was praise for the Irish, for they were the 'poor whites' of the situation—but against the coloured immigrants. A small group of them, accompanied by two white women who looked like tarts, had worked their way to the front, there to be surrounded by a cordon sanitaire of police. One of the women heckled persistently. "They are our brothers", she shouted and the coloured men, "We are here to stay!"



By this time Mosley had got on to his favourite tale about two white girls aged thirteen and fourteen who were kidnapped by two black men; and "how many men were they forced to have in nine days? Two hundred . . . at a pound each": and about how two Irishmen rescued them and how the Negro said, "This is my missus" and the Irishman "She can't be, she's only fourteen"; and about how the magistrates gave the two Negroes but five months apiece. At this point the teen-agers on the lorry and the white trash who were Mosley's men below made for the white girls who were with the coloured men with cries of "Slut" and "Get them!" and the police had to intervene, cautioning the prostitute and taking one of the coloured men away, easing tension slightly by giving way to sense of the meeting. The meeting ended. At first the crowd would not disperse and started moving towards a café frequented by white prostitutes and coloured men. The police carried one of the prostitutes who was at the centre of a commotion kicking and swearing to a Black Maria. Gradually the crowd dispersed. I talked to several people. A white prostitute said "We're the same colour as them" pointing inside the café, testifying to the solidarity of outcasts. "If Mosley gets in, there will be no more blacks and tarts"—came from a former Labour voter, and "I hate Fascism but I'm voting Mosley because I'm sick of my daughter being accosted", came from a woman who had been Communist but was still a "Socialist". Another Labour voter said he was going to abstain and so were his friends, because they were for his policy of sending the immigrants home but against his war record. When I tried heckling at another meeting a man with rotting teeth and twitching lip came up to me and snarled, "conchie": when that did not work he tried "Jew". On another occasion some teenagers I had got into conversation with were told not to talk to me but to listen to Mosley and "learn something for a change". Though North Kensington was the only place in England where a Labour car actually got spat at, there was virtually no physical violence during Mosley's campaign. Mosley had given hope to the desperate. If he got in, things would change. But since then the result of the election has deprived the desperate of any 'constitutional outlet' for their feelings. Though Mosley came bottom of the poll with 2,821 votes, the seeds Sir Oswald has sown live on.

Probably the most sympathetic of the four candidates was Michael Hydleman—the Liberal. Assisted by a youthful, open minded and enthusiastic band of middle-class political amateurs (undergraduates, housewives, a schoolmaster, a psychiatrist) and an equally youthful professional agent, he gave all those he met a sense that what his posters said—"You matter to Michael Hydleman" was true. He held a large number of open air meetings. He invited CND speakers, he preached anti-hate and stressed housing and housing only to be the cause of trouble. In this he was patently sincere and he had gone to considerable pains in working out just how much could be done by building on bombed and vacant sites which the Tories had left unused and which were in

an area too unfashionable to attract any capitalist builder. This gained him many a vote amongst the C's. Also he showed amazing pluck when one day, after a Mosley meeting through which a Labour van had fought a very rough passage, he took on, unaided and unguarded save by his wife, a gang of Mosleyites and tried to argue them into sense. He deserved every single one of the 3,118 votes he got, and it was a pity he lost his deposit. Things however were against him, for it was obvious from the start that Mosley was going to take more votes from Labour than from the Tories, and that consequently a vote for Hydleman was liable to be a vote for the Tories. With a Labour majority of but 2,943 and pre-election estimates of Mosley's poll ranging from an optimistic 2,000 to a pessimistic 6,000 there was little leeway for a liberal.

The Tories had tried middle-class candidates and failed. In 1952 they took to Bob Bulbrook as 'Your Conservative Candidate'. In 1955 he cut Labour's majority by 2,000. This time he nearly won. The description given of him in the Tory blurb is true. Bob is "a man of the people", "a forceful and able speaker", "a very human man". Indeed I should go further and say that Bob's earthy wisdom has for the English electorate something of the appeal Lonesome Rhodes—the hero of 'A Face in the Crowd'—might have for the American. A Trench Inspector with the South Eastern Gas Board by 'profession', Bob Bulbrook is a born demagogue. The local Conservative Association is well organised, friendly ladies were there to offer canvassers tea at several Committee Rooms, and when the day came there was a surplus of cars from South Kensington. Yet there was something forced about the wild cheer the blue rosetted and bowler hatted, the elderly public schoolboys and the genteel landladies, the hanging jurymen, and the shopkeepers, the smooth young careerists with their handsome wives, gave Bob Bulbrook as he came on to the platform at the eve of poll rally. They had just been hearing Sir Harry Hylton Foster—the present Speaker—admonishing them headmasterlike with forefinger uplifted, about the incompetence and irresponsibility of the Socialists, when in burst this comedy figure, this contradiction in terms, this working class Tory. What a speaker! At question time to a question on coloured immigrants—"as far as Bob Bulbrook is concerned they are as welcome as the flowers in May", and, "they were British too . . . wave it and say you are proud to breathe British". And then to a question about what the candidate proposed to do about the increasing number of crimes of violence, "Being a man who likes a fight . . . boxing and wrestling all my life"—and here Bob crouched forward, reaching for his knees letting us all see a hefty leather belt which I am sure he would have no hesitation in using should the occasion arise, "I should have no hesitation in supporting any measure for the reintroduction of corporal punishment". All this with delicious emphasis, followed by the wildest cheers of the evening. To my repeated cries of "Shame" an elderly lady turned round and

hissed "You should have been birched when you were a boy". Fact not Fiction! A similar roar of applause greeted Uncle Bob's Suez campaign as taught to Tory children. Still Sir Harry Hylton Foster saw nothing wrong with it. Had not anyone read Randolph Churchill? On my way out I felt like kicking a dachshund that had 'Vote for MacMillan' on its back. It would have cost me my job.

George Rogers, Labour M.P. for North Kensington and since 1954 Opposition Whip for London was educated at Willesden Elementary School. A former railway clerk and sometime associated with the I.L.P., 1945 swept him in as Corporal George Rogers. Since then he has moved out to Harrow, acquired the middle class accent of a salesman and a car. He is, as Herbert Morrison said at a meeting "a good constituency man", which, coming from so august an authority, I take to mean "a man who can be trusted not to put principle above party". George Rogers is liked, indeed well liked, by the majority of his local party, though not by the intellectual and CND faction; and during the campaign all three floors of the Midland Red and Heavy Cream painted party headquarters were teeming with bureaucratic activity. But though "Gorgeous George" as they call him is well liked by all but the idealists in his local party, Mr. Rogers has acquired over the years the reputation of being something of a mystery man. George Rogers is well aware of this and at an election meeting complained bitterly that he had over the years he has sat seen 20,000 of his constituents, and written 140,000 letters, and that consequently he did not deserve such a piece of Tory Slander. Technically, George Rogers has not neglected his electorate, and were he sitting for a more restful area his performance might pass. Morally, he has. At the time of the Race Riots he had seemingly nothing more constructive to say than that we ought to have coloured policemen to look into coloured vice, and that, besides, the trouble was really caused by people who were not Notting Hill residents at all. At a pre-election meeting he told us how he had done his level best "to ameliorate and palliate" matters—these were the words! He had even been *allowed* to break his silence as a Party Whip. This however was not good enough. If he has ever attacked the Tory Borough Council about housing none of the people I talked to in Notting Hill had ever heard about it. And recipients of the 140,000 letters he has signed tell me that whether it be slums, German re-armament, or the H-bomb, the answer is always the same—quotations from the Party line. Worse than this: alone amongst the non-fascist candidates, George Rogers saw fit to kow-tow to the incipient racism of his electorate by including a line about getting rid of "undesirable elements"—needless to say no criteria of undesirability were specified. I got into an argument at Party headquarters about all this, only to be told how unfair it was to be "too liberal" and how one had to see both sides of the question! With an 877 majority, North Kensington is now a marginal constituency.

To Fly A Kite

Clancy Sigal

An open letter to the British Comrades of the New Left, Victory For Socialism, Tribune, etc.

BROTHERS,

A drive has now begun in deadly earnest, within the establishments of the major political parties, to make more rapid and drastic the already existing tendency towards the 'Americanisation' of British political life. By this I mean that the political parties shall not represent inherently distinct ways or visions of life, but will exist primarily as institutional shelters for various pressure groups contending within an increasingly 'pluralistic' society.

You can't see the sky for the kites.

Since the election, it has been urged—loudly from without, discreetly from within—that the Labour Party should disengage itself from the vestiges of socialist content in the party programme.

The prospect that, by this means, the Labour Party will transform itself into a vote-gathering organism resembling the Democratic Party in my own country, does not faze Mr. Jay and his kite-flying colleagues on Hampstead Heath. Indeed, they appear to welcome the change: they believe it corresponds, one supposes, to the fact (now "proven" by October 8) that British welfare capitalism has a permanently viable destiny.

Such a transformation in the Labour Party will be a catastrophe, not only to itself, but the entire nation.

Because I am writing for this magazine I am going to take the liberty of assuming the anti-Jay position as more or less implicit, and to go on to touch on the ways in which I think it is bad.

For historical reasons, which we need not go into, political life in America has almost always been monopolised by two great parties which did not fundamentally disagree on the issue of capitalism, but only on the division of the 'cut'. That this was inevitable (and even necessary), given American circumstance, I do not wish to dispute. What I do wish to emphasise is the lasting and profound damage to the *quality* of American life which this has meant.

What it has meant is that the tension over great moral and social issues has had an irresistible tendency to become weak, and over the past few years, almost completely to disappear. This lack of tension, this slackening of 'bite' and vigour, is seen at its most obvious and squalid in what passes for public debate in Congress and state legislatures.

But in its most pernicious form, what I am talking about can be seen, if one but will, in the very substance and homely detail of American life. Life in America, I suggest, has tended to deteriorate seriously ever since politics in America became fixed within two parties which had agreed to play it as gentlemen.

If you accept the case that life in America has gone off the boil then you must accept its implications for Britain.

I am, in other words, alleging that there is something like a chronic moral and cultural crisis either gathering or present in America; that it is at least partly the responsibility of the major organs of political expression which base their appeal and ideologies on what *is* rather than what *ought to be*; and that a special and critical disruption occurred in American life at more or less the same moment when that moral energy which, at its most natural, is directed squarely at important social issues—the national libido—was trivialised and strangled by the new spirit of political "togetherness".

I take it as given that every healthy people needs to believe in an ascending, visionary road, none more so than Americans with our built-in frontier-style idealism and prickly, earnest desire for moral rectitude. Since successive establishments have sapped public life, of a rhetoric not only of serious politics, but also of public responsibility, the American people have been cheated of an alternative approach to this visionary road. The result is that, like the secondary-modern raped Teddy Boys of Britain, the American people, taken as a whole, today finds itself bereft of a vocabulary by which to express its sense of being cheated; without any way of giving expression to the instinct that something has gone radically wrong with life at precisely the same time when, in material terms, the Great American Dream of fraternal individualism seems on the verge of realisation. Deprived of vocabulary and hence insight, the Americans have reacted in a predictably energetic and tragic way—by turning in on themselves, insulating themselves against reality and producing deep, disruptive fissures in the fabric of national life. I don't want to try to 'prove' anything here by quoting scare statistics about mental instability, family troubles, juvenile delinquency, the new cynicism toward the old "payola." ("you have a great future ahead of you. God bless you, Charles Van Doren.") But they are damnably relevant.

Often, here in England, I have had to listen to criticisms of America, and American life, coming from Labour Party members. I cannot always accept such criticism, and in fact regard much of what passes for responsible comment as not well-informed. Be that as it may, many of those aspects of American life which British socialists most abhor—the pervasive public irresponsibility, the blind competitiveness, 'kitsch' culture and the sudden acts of irrational violence expressing moral and emotional discontent—are sure to make a more aggressive appearance on the British scene, if the Labour Party persists in its present policy of "me-too".

In saying this, I must confess to harbouring perhaps less rancour towards the undoubtedly right-wing leader-

The text of a talk, originally delivered to the Cambridge Labour Club, and written up for NLR on our request.

ship than many of you on the Left. In substituting hell-and-brimstone castigations of this or that personality on the National Executive (usually warranted) for a proper theory of modern society, it seems to me you often entertain a tragically foreshortened picture of what the Labour Party is and, historically, has been. The simple truth, of course, is that the party, from its inception, has been principally reformist in character and parliamentary in tactic. It is surely not the Labour Party as such, but the existence within it of a Utopian, unselfish and socialist minority, which has guaranteed not only to the party but to the country as a whole a certain minimum of healthy tension, moral tautness, keeping social and political waters constantly moving.

At the present moment, and in the foreseeable future, it seems to me there will co-exist in Britain two enormous and balanced blocks in the electorate—Tories involved with and committed to status-quo capitalism and Labourites under the sway of 'half-way housism' (with, in all likelihood, something like a 'permanent' Tory majority in the country). It is seriously to be doubted—barring a major international explosion, economic or political—that you can do much of anything about this *in electoral terms*. But are these the only, indeed the most important terms of responsible politics? More and more I doubt it.

Thus, what seems to me to be crucial in this unfortunately sturdy political mosaic, this political stasis, is the make-up and outlook of Left Labour.

The building of the kind of Left organisationally prepared to carry out widespread education on basic socialism, is not only crucial to the health of the Labour Party but to the morale of the entire nation. A virile Left is a national beacon even when the nation is induced to vote against it. You would be sharing the most philistine values of your opposition if you begin to confuse the voting patterns of the community with its aspirations.

For myself, I believe that the persistent failure of the Labour Party to capture adherents must be laid not only at the door of the leadership but also at that of the Left, and by this I mean Trade Union left, university radicals, constituency Bevanites, *Tribune*, Victory for Socialism, *Universities and Left Review*, the lot. Because it remains true, I think, that this Left shows grave and fundamental defects of outlook which all too often appear as the reverse side of the coin of grubbiness and shallowness which we unite in rejecting.

To get closer to the bone.

In your criticism of the Labour centre and right, it is automatically assumed, or implied, by your tone of attack and reproach that if only they were more like you things would be on the upgrade. I wonder. The longer I live in England the more I suspect an unconscious conspiracy between Left and Right not to disturb seriously the ancient continuity of class structure and national unity, the chief technique by which social innovation is avoided being that of insularity, the tendency towards ingrownness, towards suspicion of anything foreign, new or unexpected.

How else to explain your lack of influence in the country at large? Capitalist propaganda? Tory and Labour monopoly? The influence of the 'mass media'? Social mobility? To a large extent, of course, these have taken their toll of your potential influence and growth. But I believe the toll would have been less had you been more courageous, less myopic—had you, in fact, the intellectual guts to realise and come to terms with the fact that your analysis and protest, if it was at all to be taken seriously, might put you beyond a certain pale; not only beyond the body of the Labour Party (temporarily, it is to be hoped) but also beyond certain traditions and habits of thought which have been cherished for centuries.

What I am talking about are faults which may be embedded in the very roots of the *best* part of the Labour Party.

First, a crippling pragmatism which, on evidence, is rarely more virile than that of the established hierarchies. This ensures that you work as blindly as your foes, following your noses (and Bevens) and are forever surprised and befuddled when the opposition steals your best planks and personnel.

Certainly, this absence (more accurately, this disavowal) of theory is not peculiar to the British Left but is a marked, almost endemic feature of most modern social-democratic movements in the West. But I submit that just so long as you continue to turn your faces away from the benefits and dangers of theory—of long-term "revolutionary insight"—for that long must you submit to the humiliations of a permanent and scratchy minority existence.

My own thinking on this point is far from clear, partly because there is so little new work, factual and theoretical, on which to base oneself. But I think what I am suggesting is that you come to terms with the main viable socialist theory which has thus far been put forth, Marxism. And I do mean 'come to terms'—neither accepting nor rejecting wholesale, but drawing back a distance in order to put things together into something like an orderly, palpable intellectual construct.

It is by no means certain that you can, within a democratic context, achieve an effective socialist theory without butting head on into the concept of the 'advance guard' which so tantalises and terrifies most of us. Of course there are dangers, serious ones. We have all seen how theory can blind men to reality, how it can—far from functioning as a guide to action—fanatically exalt Reason and push it beyond the limits of endurance. The essential thing is that a start is made.

This dove-tails all too readily into the question of 'anti-intellectualism', which is one of the discreet scandals of the movement. This inner hostility to intellectuals and their work is a force in itself. It is, in fact, the means by which the Party remains class-stratified and committed to short-range goals.

That the rank and file of the movement remain stubbornly, parochially hostile to intellectuals no one in his senses can deny. (I can still remember the night in a

Lancashire pub when, to the approving laughter of his Labour colleagues on a local council, a Tribune-subscribing councillor said, "Mate, around here an intellectual is someone who sleeps with someone else's wife". I am still trying to convince myself it was a joke.)

The Labour leadership must bear terrific guilt here. Instead of going to lengths to break down this provincialism, the leadership has persistently pandered to it, by not seriously attempting to create channels and the atmosphere for a two-way communication.

But I am not convinced that the Left is so much more courageous in its attitude to intellectuals, or that it is the more innocent of timidity in staking a bold and aggressive claim for them. How very often, in the past, have I heard Tribunites or V. for S.'ers oppose the analysis and programme of Mr. Gaitskelp's 'back room boys', not with equally trenchant counter-argument, but with emotionally stirring, programmatically empty exaltations of the rank and filer as "he who knows best".

The rank and filer does not know best. How often must we remind ourselves of this? Nor does the intellectual. Nor the party bureaucrat. Knowing best in this connection is—must it be said again—a conjunction and collaboration of all elements of the movement in a free-swinging polemic; and with your own intellectuals, Left intellectuals, constantly testing, guiding, pioneering, questioning.

Again and again you inveigh against the bitter injustices of the class system, and do nothing at all about eliminating from your own ranks one of its most odious by-product, the crippling alienation of rank and filer from intellectual.

I think, at this point, I can hear some comrades, particularly in the North, saying, "Who the bloody hell does he think he is? The Labour movement must always be based on the rank and file, its heart and soul. Look what happens to the party when it listens to the London intellectuals—it goes right *and* loses elections!"

Such comrades have a just grievance but a bad target. It would be suicidal for you of the Left to go one inch along the way of identifying Gaitskellism—accommodation—with intellectualism *per se*. You must set yourselves against such demagoguery, by ceaselessly pointing out that intellectuals have a place at the very head of the column; your job is to draw more and more of them from the rank and file working-class, from hitherto untouched non-university regions of life, and to create men and women endowed with both minds *and* memories.

The fact is, the movement is, and will continue to be, staffed by 'middle-class' intellectuals. It is your job to work out the specific, immediate mechanics of creating communication,—uninhibited, unprejudiced, alive dialogue—between the specialist, the activist and the rank and filer.

However, where the comrades are bang on the beam is their righteous anger at the parochialism, the insularity, the class snobbishness—the sheer avoidance of life—which appears to prevent the bulk of socialist intellectuals from establishing real live relationships of an electric and

vigorous nature south of the Thames and north of Magdalen College. . . or perhaps anywhere, even among themselves. The responsibility of such young men and women (for example) who operate this magazine is so self-evident as to require no further comment.

Leading straight off from this is the question of, for want of a better word, what I will call, Puritanism. By this I mean that Cromwellian tendency towards suspicion of secular gaiety and unpredictableness and colour (so sadly lacking in contemporary Britain) which has historically, as far as I can see, been the accompaniment of the moral fire of the Labour Left and its ancestors. To overcome this—if indeed you want to—requires the kind of self-analysis which many of you find abhorrent, but without which I believe you are unmanned in the political struggle for (especially) the younger minds.

This puritanism is of a very special British kind, and in many ways is something which I deeply respect as one of the authentic springs of Western socialism. Its day, however, is drawing to a close; if for no other reason than that youth—and the best part of youth—is instinctively, as it acquires health and literacy and leisure, opposed to nay-saying. If I may say so, I find large, if unconscious, doses of this among the more mature activists. It is starkly reflected in the pages of *Tribune* and *New Reasoner*, and the self-imposed doctrinal asceticism of Party Conferences.

It was the mission (if time does not prove the word grandiose) of the *Universities & Left Review* to confront the traditional puritan Left with a broader view of life and what it is about. To my mind it is a mark of distinction, and not a cause for concern, that so many articles in the old *ULR* might not have fitted incongruously in the less political, less Left publications. The sad, dangerous thing is that, in attempting to synthesise old and new, to overcome the time-honoured sectarianism of the Left, *ULR* should have painted itself into a corner, where political problems (above all, the central questions of political power—who has it? What are they doing with it? How can you get it?) were either ignored or treated summarily in favour of cultural interrogations of startling unsophistication. In the act, too often neither politics nor culture was dealt with satisfactorily, with a sense of originality and continuity. I would suggest that a cause of this failure to sustain operations above the prevailing ceiling was the absence of an organised base for the New Left. Of which more in a moment.

At its worst, the New Left so far has been lazy about its political and economic analysis because it too easily depended, not for its vocabulary but its assumptions, on the Old Left; and it was superficial in its cultural observations when it failed to realise its link with a large and intermittently valuable literature and experience existing prior to 1956. Sometimes, indeed, it looked as if *ULR* was purchasing its liberty of comment on literary-theatre-cinema-mass culture by an automatic act of loyalty and subscription to old socio-political dogmas, to their spirit if not letter. With the *New Reasoner* the obverse

was true. Its editors never did look comfortable negotiating with 'culture' as something worthy in itself, with the result that its political analysis, especially when addressed to the most contemporaneous problems, limped. I don't know the reasons for this. Maybe the New Left hadn't done its basic homework. Or, maybe it was unable, given its parents and circumstances of birth, to free itself entirely of precisely the type of political puritanism it prided itself on scourging.

This puritanism, it seems to me, is a profoundly anti-educational force these days, regardless of what it was in the past. For as long as it continues to hold sway over you, it shall close your minds to the further frontiers of socialism which, by definition, must encompass the entire wealth of human knowledge: and that includes the mass of sensible data acquired since the days of the Chartists.

I am aware of treading on extremely sensitive ground. The puritanism of which I speak has been a strong historical force enabling the British nation, and especially its socialists to sustain a unity and drive through some of the ugliest and most desperately trying periods of human development, through holocausts of wars, industrial revolutions and political betrayals. Nevertheless, you must come to terms with it. or, as a movement, slowly die.

It seems to me that the very first job of the Left in British Labour is the taking of immediate steps to establish a socialist Youth and Student movement.

If for no other reason than self-defence against rot, you must do this. In no other practical way can I think for you to begin the wholesale, massive job of renewing your ranks, creating communication at the very outset

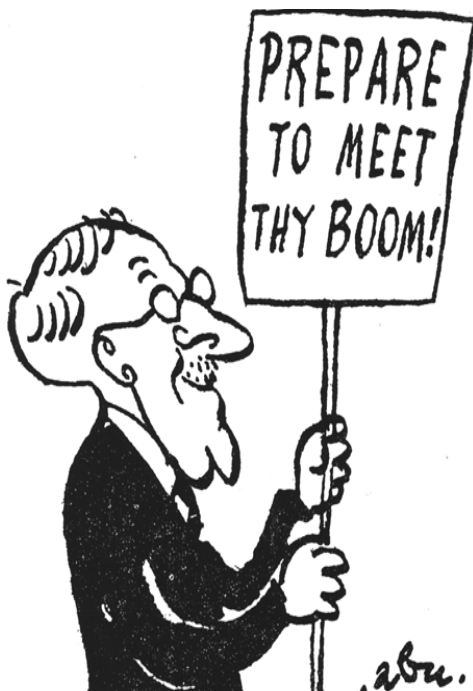
between 'workers' and intellectuals and doing your damndest to blur the obnoxious line between them; to set the face of your movement toward wit, sharpness and spontaneity.

To be specific. I believe that a series of concentric conferences ought to be called, carefully and responsibly and at first modestly. Conferences of younger people from the universities, from Constituency Parties, from Trade Unions, from any area, organised or not, of British life which realistically suggests itself. (This means you must find a way of reaching into the towns and suburbs to that magnificent reservoir of untouched energy, the isolated bands of provincial and suburban youth who listen to Chris Barber and the Modern Jazz Quartet, read Braine and Kerouac and would have gone to Aldermaston if someone had *really* told them).

Such conferences to be loosely sponsored—if need be—by a whole amalgam of interested organisations who will keep their adult and perhaps jaded hands out of it: *Tribune*, NALSO, *New Left Review*, parts of the Co-op movement, national or local unions, student organisations etc. On the explicit understanding that it is the young people themselves who will choose their own form of organisation, their own profile of socialism, their own rate of growth—by their own hands. If you, the older ones, can help—fine and good. But let it be the help of a disinterested, Shavian uncle and not the meddling interference of overly 'experienced' old-timers, who always know what is best and wish, for the best motives in the world, to spare the young the pain of their own mistakes. The young *will* make mistakes. They will be by turns dilatory and headstrong, perhaps frivolous. Their organisation will probably be riven with all the embarrassments of political deflowering and factionalism (the Communists and Trotskyites and these-and-them-ites will 'move in' as surely as the sun rises in the morning), and all to the raucous accompaniment of anything from, and inclusive of, Little Richard and Dave Brubeck.

Fine! As it should be. I am absolutely convinced of the basic responsibility and integrity of British youth. You must give them their head, asking only that you be permitted to pass on to them some of the experience and ethical fire of socialism which you have so painstakingly accumulated to yourselves. If you do not trust them, if you begin to hedge and doubt and mutter pompous things about freedom having its obligations, it means you do not trust yourselves. You would not be human if you did not wish a Youth and Student movement, in some way or other, to resemble yourselves. But their right to pick and choose, to accept or reject, what they will of their heritage must be inviolable and uncontested.

I am of no opinion about whether such a youth movement should affiliate itself to the Labour Party. That is for it, and not the Party, to decide. But I am sure that the launching of a genuine Youth and Student movement in Britain, owing allegiance to a socialist picture of life, can ensure not only the substance of the Labour Party but may provide a truly important touchstone for the whole country.



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self-respect. The trade turned out experts—this man knew how to feel the differences between types of wool, this one to keep the machines going well and so on. You can see much the same air in a main-line express driver of the old type. He's got a craft and he is important. If you go into the pubs in the West Riding mill towns you're struck by how many of the men have this sort of air.

R.W.: Yes, and that's how I remember the men of my own village. They were important, and felt themselves important, because they lived there and knew each other. They'd call nobody "Sir", in any ordinary circumstances, and I notice this difference, in Southern England at least, where so many people seem to take up a servant's attitude quite naturally: I still can't stand it when people call me "Sir" on the bus—at least they do when I've got my suit on. But I remember the men at home—a whole attitude in a way of dress. Good clothes, usually, that you bought for life. The big heavy overcoat, good jacket, good breeches, leggings, then a cardigan, a waistcoat, a watchchain, and all of it open, as a rule, right down to the waist. Layers of it going in, and of course no collar. But standing up, quite open. They weren't, really, people with a sense of inferiority.

R.H.: *Of course the class system there would be different.*

R.W.: Yes, the best-off people were the larger farmers, and most of them tenants even when they could have afforded to buy. Of course the odd retired English Home and Colonial: bustling around, but not I think really affecting the life. A large village, about five hundred people, scattered over miles, and the middle-class settlers so very few; not like Sussex, where there's one behind every hedge, or a wall if they can afford it. The chapels set the standards, in almost everything, and that, really, was the ground of seriousness. You can't expect people who haven't had a long education themselves, and no access to a variety of books, to develop a high culture. But it's a question whether high culture is compatible with the ordinary values. What is the attitude, for example, to a child going on with his education, when it's discovered that he's "bright". Is this considered odd, or is it regarded as a gift?

R.H.: *In Wales it is a gift I suppose?*

R.W.: I've gone over this pretty carefully. With the girls, of course, it was different, though they'd go on to High School from the farms and the cottages, if they got scholarships; then some would drop out early, if they were wanted at home. But I can't think of any boys at the grammar school who dropped out like that. I can think of one case from the elementary school, a boy I thought bright, who came from a very poor family, right up on the mountain—three miles walk down from the mountain to school. He wasn't allowed to go in for the scholarship, he was needed—it mightn't even then have been anything but straight economic need. It's interesting, you see, that most of us didn't regard ourselves as poor. My father was getting two pounds, two pounds ten, a week, as a signalman, but we didn't think we were poor.

R.H.: *You'd be all right for a pension, too. I know we used to look up to railwaymen and policemen.*

R.W.: Yes, my father was offered a job, in the late 'thirties, as a school attendance officer, but he didn't take it, because of the pension. But in any case we had no normal middle class, as a class, to compare with. To us the poor families were perhaps half-a-dozen in the whole village, with very bad cottages—I remember one with an earth floor; usually very large families, and the man was ill, or drank, and didn't get a regular job, just odd jobs and the harvest. So we weren't poor, most of us, in our own minds. But the other consciousness, that of being working-class, is more complicated. Basically, I think, it centred about the railway. There, as a new element, you had a group of men conscious of their identity in a different way. And in fact, at the two stations, you got the growth of political and trade-union attitudes of a quite mature urban kind.

R.H.: *That's extraordinarily interesting. You think it only came in with the railway?*

R.W.: Well, the self-government tradition in the chapels disposed many people to democratic feeling; feeling, really, rather than thinking. Someone like my father who grew up in a farm labourer's family, outside the tradition that brought conscious trade union attitudes, still got, I think, the feelings that matter. There was just enough local and practical democracy, but even more there was this sense that to be a man in this place was to be important; that this mattered more than any sort of grading on a social basis. Of course when he came back from the first war he was much more definite politically, and then on the railway it was the Labour Party, the union, the understanding of what a strike was, what it implied.

R.H.: *The differences seem to me striking. Leeds in my day had just under half a million people. A great many of the working-people seemed to belong to families which had originally come in from the surrounding countryside between, I suppose, 1840 and 1880. Once there they began to live in new ways, segregated into districts. As we know, their districts grew up round the works, near canals, rivers, railway yards. The better-class districts were up the hill or on the right side of the wind. Generally one gets the impression, looking at this sort of city, that this physical separation illustrates less obvious separations between the various social groups. You don't have the sort of relations I called "organic" when I mentioned the mill towns. What you have in a town like Leeds—or Sheffield or Manchester—is much more a sense of great blocks of people. Of course each block would be shot through with all sorts of distinctions and differences. Among working-people you had extended families, often overlapping; and particular neighbourhood loyalties; and you had distinctions between say the transport men, the heavy engineering men, those who laboured for the Corporation and so on and so on. The distinctions were very fine and very complicated. But still you could see first this large rough distinction—that industrially the area was a block, or a pool, of general labour for the city's industries—the human equivalent of the private reservoirs at the side of some*

of the big works. In our area there were a lot of men who hadn't served an apprenticeship, who weren't skilled workers—or not really skilled—but who could turn their hands to a number of jobs within related heavy industries. They felt two main kinds of connections, with their neighbourhood and with the industries they worked in; but the neighbourhood connections were stronger for most. They felt they belonged to a district more than to a trade—though not in the way country workers feel they belong to a village. We talked about “our” kind of people in “our” kind of area. You see this in the Institute's study of Bethnal Green too. Still—they were villages of a kind, and remarkably tiny villages. You knew exactly where your boundaries were.

R.W.: The most difficult bit of theory, that I think both of us have been trying to get at, is what relation there is between kinds of community, that we call working-class, and the high working-class tradition, leading to democracy, solidarity in the unions, socialism. As I saw it, this came from the place of work: in my village, the railway. I suppose this is always likely to be so. But is it the case that the high tradition is strongest where there are certain kinds of community: the mining villages, for example? To what extent can we establish a relation between given kinds of working-class community and what we call working-class consciousness in the sense of the Labour movement? There are discouraging signs, aren't there, in places where people have come together from all over, and live in very mixed and probably anxious communities? The men may be working-class at work, but not necessarily at home. The wives may not in their own minds be working-class at all.

R.H.: *This I find very complicated indeed. As I've said, the sort of group I grew up in was intensely local. You felt you belonged to Hunslet if you were in the middle of Leeds, outside the Town Hall; but when you were in Hunslet you only belonged to one-and-a-half streets. This was one sort of connection and a powerful general influence on attitudes. But it seemed to have very little political significance. Political solidarity came out of industrial situations. And in my experience those people who were politically active—and there were few of them—were regarded as slightly odd in the neighbourhoods. There was a terrific streak of small conservatism. This may have been fed by a desire for independence. There were many industries and they were continually swapping men. Some of the men liked to feel completely free to swap as and when they wished. My grandfather called himself a Conservative, I think; he also tended to show his independence at intervals by downing tools, telling off the foreman and going elsewhere.*

Perhaps one important way in which political consciousness can grow strongly is where you have a large body of men who both feel locally that they are one and can also make wider—perhaps national—connections with others in the same job. The obvious instance is coal-mining, where you had a body of men who felt themselves solidly working-class, who had a lot of pride and dignity and self-consciousness, and who made strong connections with others right across the country.

R.W.: Yes, and of course new industries—the motor industry, for instance, may be producing different patterns again. I know I watch every strike for evidence

on this question; whether the practice of solidarity is really weakening, or has been really learned. But then of course it isn't only at work that these class attitudes matter.

R.H.: *Yes, some of the more striking instances of working-class political solidarity seem to have occurred not only in the larger and unmistakably working-class industries but also to have gained from a sense of continuing local—using this now to mean quite a large area—traditions, loyalties, consciousness. A minority from these groups were able to work within these groups, making active connections between the local solidarity and political solidarity.*

Today people are moving around more; many of the old areas are being split up; new industries and new forms of industry are recruiting people from all over, offering good wages and a much more fluid range of opportunities. What we want to know is what replaces the old channels by which political consciousness expressed itself—the local, the homogeneous, the solidly ‘working-class’ feeling, the minority within. Or does much of the old feeling carry over?

R.W.: I think we can say that so far as trade union organisation is concerned, the increase in jobs of a new or more skilled kind isn't weakening the unions. Indeed some of the most active unions since the war, and most to the left politically, are the skilled workers. There, at any rate, the principles are being carried through. But that's only part of it. There's this whole question of a rising standard of living, and its effect on working-class social ideas. With more goods available, steadier employment, and so on, you can reasonably set your sights on a more fitted, a more furnished life. And of course the formula is: the working-class become middle-class, as they get their washing machines and things like that. I think myself that what the *Economist* calls ‘deproletarianisation’ is very complicated. If you test it by voting Labour, the facts are that through all the misery of the inter-war years, in a supposedly more ‘proletarian’ situation, the Labour vote was much less than now. In 1924 5½ million; 1929, 8½ million; 1931, 6½ million; 1935, 8½ million, and now, since the war, 12 million in 1945, nearly 14 million in 1951, back by 1955 towards 12 million again. Voting is only one kind of test, but it's interesting, as we've seen for ourselves, that there's no kind of automatic correspondence between being working-class, objectively, feeling working-class, and voting for a working-class party. Now what is meant, at the moment, by saying the working-class is becoming middle-class? Which kind of consciousness is pointed at? You could say, objectively, that in fact the middle-class has become working-class: that many more people who feel themselves middle-class are in fact selling their labour than in the nineteenth century, when, outside the professions, it meant having a bit of property, or working on your own, the small farmer or shopkeeper, or of course small businessman. And the middle-class, nowadays, take very readily to common-service schemes, in their use of the Welfare State, for instance, as Abel-Smith showed in *Conviction*. Perhaps both ‘working-class’ and ‘middle-class’

need radical new definitions, to get into line with the facts of our society. Not that class feeling has gone, by any means, but it's in a different situation, when nearly everybody lives by selling his labour, yet in fact 'feeling' middle-class and 'feeling' working-class still goes on, buttressed by hundreds of differences in status and social respect. We could be a very much more unified community, if we mostly depend on our labour, and if we accept common provision for our social needs. All I'd say is that certain major principles, that matter for our future, have in fact come out of the high working-class tradition, supported by many aspects of ordinary working-class life. I mean the sense of community, of equality, of genuine mutual respect: the sense, too, of fairness, when the humanity of everyone in the society is taken as basic, and must not be outraged by any kind of exploitation.

R.H.: True. But today there are so many forces which foster other assumptions—such strong and persistent pressures towards making pretty well everybody accept a group of workable and convenient attitudes. This is not just a matter of advertising trying to make us all live the other-directed life rather than the communal life, or to keep up with the Jones's rather than being independent—its part of the sheer pressure of any highly centralised society (and that itself is reinforced by the international situation).

Let's go back for a moment to the statement that the working-class has become middle-class, though I suspect it as much as you do. I think the main forces here are economic. Prosperity does seem likely to weaken that sense of solidarity which had its origins in a feeling of common need and could be reinforced by living together in a large industrial district. Again, one has only to remember family and kinship. If you spent some time on a new housing estate you are aware of a kind of break, of new pressures and tensions—but also of new opportunities. A great deal has been cut away, and it's difficult to take the proper measure of the new prospects. How does one—how should one—live in a place like this, people seem to be asking unconsciously.

I'm not surprised that working-class people take hold of the new goods, washing-machines, television and the rest (this is where the statement that they have become middle-class is a statement of a simple truth). This is in line with working-class tradition and isn't necessarily regrettable or reprehensible—what one does question is the type of persuasion which accompanies these sales, since its assumptions are shallower than many of those people already have.

A lot of the old attitudes remain, but what one wants to know is how quickly these new forces—steady prosperity, greater movement, wives going out to work—will change attitudes, especially among younger people. I've talked to a lot of working-class adolescents recently and been struck not only by the fact that they didn't see their industrial and political situation in the way their fathers did at their age (one expected that), but by the difficulty in getting any coherent picture of their situation out of them. Everything seemed open, and they seemed almost autonomous.

But by the time they've married and settled in with commitments a great many forces encourage the picture of a decent, amiable but rather selfish, workable society—the Mew Elizabethan

Age. In this Mr. Macmillan is one with Sir Robert Fraser, with many people in Personnel Management and a great many other elements . . . the Green Belt World of cosy suburban assumptions which is neither really communal nor really individual.

R.W.: I agree, and this is why I think the cultural argument, that you and I have been trying to develop, is now so crucial. To understand this society, we have to look at its culture, even for political answers. We have to ask whether this pressure to 'unify' us isn't just a kind of low-level processing. They want to breed out difference, so that we become more predictable and more manageable consumers and citizens, united in fact around nothing very much, and the form of the unity conceals the basic inhumanities: in respect, in education, in work. The system is much less easy to identify, and it isn't only the old-style boss or group of bosses. Except when a scandal comes up, we hardly know who the controllers are. It's much more impersonal, yet it passes itself off as a natural order. It's built in so deep that you have to look for it in the whole culture, not just in politics or economics.

R.H.: Yes, they are the problems of prosperity. Though we hear this so much we can forget how many areas there are in which the situation isn't really much different from the 'thirties'. You can still find exploitation in England, especially in some of the borders of small works—but they are outside the main new trend.

R.W.: Also unprotected people, the people not in the unions, the people not working, pensioners and so on.

R.H.: Yet when we've allowed for that, the new situation is seen best of all in the great Corporations. You can see there an increasing stratification—distinctions being made at each level from apprentices all the way up. I know one manager who says the most snobbish people in his works are the apprentices—selected from the foundry floor for extra training and given some privileges.

R.W.: The stratification at work is reproduced, physically, in new communities. You can see it at Margam: this really beautiful making of steel, and everything round it as ugly as hell. The main workers' estate is there in the mill's shadow, but the managers and executives drive away to live in 'unspoiled' places like Gower or Porthcawl.

R.H.: All this opens up a whole range of work for anyone interested in the relations between culture, work and society . . . all the way up to the way 'high art' is taken in and done for at the due level. They say automation will soon make it possible to produce variety—a predictable recurrent variety—within mass production. In much the same way you feel the new system allows for a few varieties of pseudo-non-conformists to be built into the pattern.

But to get back to problems within industry. The same manager I mentioned before says he can get into touch with most of his staff—if they are at some point they can recognise on the ladder, with someone below them. But he says he feels lost with—can't get in touch with—the boys who haven't been selected. They've contracted out of the scheme and their lives go on elsewhere.

I'm constantly struck by the strength of our sense of class. We find it very hard to shake off—it's like pulling yourself up by our own bootstraps. So I wonder whether many of us are transferring it—the need for a sense of social class—to the new kinds of industrial or functional stratification . . . and so helping along that stratification. We don't need to feel it consciously, but simply to accept the notion of grades seeping all through society. We seem to have three-tiered minds: upper, middle and lower class; high, middle and lowbrow; Third, Home and Light. The new stratifications by function probably gain a lot of power from our traditional assumptions about class.

R.W.: Yes. One interesting thing is the way this kind of status thinking is remoulding the Conservative Party. A good deal of this new Conservatism is of course just a selling-line; the hard-core of preserving a class society is still there. But still one notices how many contemporary Conservative MPs would have seemed to a Conservative of say 1900, or even the 1930's, not their kind of men at all.

R.H.: *And some of the Labour Party talk in this way too, with less justification or—luckily—conviction.*

R.W.: The emphasis the Conservatives put is quite strong and attractive: that the competitive society is a good thing, that the acquisitive society is a good thing, that all the style of modern living is satisfying and a real aim in life. They seem to believe these things a lot more strongly than the Labour Party believes in anything. Labour seems the conservative party, in feeling, and it's bound to remain so unless it really analyses this society, not to come to terms with it, but to offer some deep and real alternative, of a new kind. I think it all centres on the nature of community, and when people say you and I are nostalgic, or whatever, I want to get this completely clear. We have learned about community, in our own ways, but we're not interested in the business of reproduction: it's the principle that's important. The fact is that communication is the basic problem of our society, even on narrow economic grounds, where failure to communicate, in any real sense, causes major waste of resources. But it's no answer to go about it as they're now doing: 'how can we put this which we want to say, or have done, in communicable forms that even the simplest person can take?' Like looking for a contraceptive that an illiterate can take by the mouth; and most mass-communication techniques, and personnel studies and so on, are just that. I believe that communication cannot be effective if it is thought of as simply transmission. It depends, if it is to be real—between people rather than just units in production or consumers on a market—depends on real community of experience, and the channels open, so that we are all involved. Not selling a line, but sharing real experience.

R.H.: *Mass communications help to process people not just because they see them in large blocks but—because I think this is your point—they naturally tend to subordinate what is being said to the way of saying it . . . because they are so struck by the fact that millions can be reached if only one finds a way. The stress goes on presentation. I think of it as the replacement of*

virtue—the heart of what is being said, by virtuosity—the manner of saying it.

R.W.: Yes. And just to bring it back finally to ourselves. You're absolutely right about the system permitting, even needing, pseudo-non-conformists. In the last eighteen months or so I've felt a situation like they set up in their colonies, where they have members for native affairs, who are not going to influence decisions, but who are encouraged, even petted, to show their robes every so often. Being cast for this role of member for working-class culture is just as insulting and as useless as that. Obviously the available channels must be used, as well as trying to build new ones. It's easy to say I'm not. available to be fingered, to see whether I'd suit the establishment. At the same time, there the system is, and we all live in it. I think we have both found—you've often said—how many people are trying to play it straight, trying to get it clear and the fact that the system excludes so much, in real human terms, means that the response against it, even if confused and partial, goes on inevitably being built. There, for us, is what matters, wherever we can find it. Yes, we reject the constitution that would place us and use us, but it's not any kind of simple gesture of revolt. It's a long effort to keep certain experiences, certain possibilities, alive. Not even as a minority, though clearly we have more time: this is our ordinary work. But because we know the human version we are offered is sterile, and that many people know this, and that to try to clarify it, try to act where we can, makes a life.

Coast to Coast

A Coast-to-Coast March Against The Bomb has been organised by the Sheffield Youth Campaign for December 26 to January 3. The route of the march is Liverpool – Prescott – St. Helens – Wigan – Bolton – Bury – Rochdale – Littleborough-Halifax- Bradford – Leeds – Castleford – Pontefract – Nottingham – Snaith – Goole – Howden – South Cave – Hessel – Hull.

The final leg of the march is into Hull, Sunday afternoon, January 3. For those who are prepared to march the whole way, the contingent leaves Liverpool, Central station at 12 noon, Saturday, December 26. It would be an excellent thing if young Campaigners were prepared to make a special sacrifice, at New Year, to join the Yorkshire and Lancashire Youth Campaigns, and to swell the numbers on this march.

Details from Eric L. Green, Secretary, Sheffield Youth Campaign for ND, 31 Lamb Hill Close, Richmond, Sheffield, 13. (Sheffield 396634).

The Bug House

John Braine

Elegy for a provincial cinema

NO-ONE EVER uses the little cinema's official name, a Greek-French hybrid suggesting racecourses and leopard-skin seats. It was opened some forty years ago as the Bug House, and the Bug House it will remain to the natives.

It has none of the trimmings of the big-circuit cinemas—no neon signs, no glossy stills from the current film, no huge foyer with ankle-deep carpeting, no coloured photographs of the stars. Its size and prices of admission (sevenpence and tenpence, half-price for children) permit only the irreducible minimum: a poster in dropsical display faces a century out of date, a timetable of features over the paybox, and a tiny lobby opening directly on to the street. Through the door of the auditorium float out scraps of dialogue: *You can't do this to me, Watch out Tex, that gun is loaded, I am the Hooded Terror*, and, gaspingly, through blood in the throat, *The treasure's— in— the—* And then there's the whine of bullets again or the dull matter-of-fact thud of bombs or the hysterical scream of sirens or the high-pitched violin which means that Something Is Coming Out of Space. There are softer sounds too—the quivering sweetness of Tin Pan Alley music with its suggestion of an enormous emptiness in the background, like blancmange eaten in the Gobi Desert, and the husky voices that say *I love you, Baby* and *I shouldn't have done that*, and, sooner or later, *This thing is bigger than both of us*. One feels an eavesdropper, there's something sad and Noah-naked about these sounds from the darkness.

But inside it isn't sad. There's a smell as scruffy and cheerful as the children who fill the place—orange, chocolate, horsehair, tobacco, and the ghost of geraniums from the accumulation of disinfectant with which an old man in a shabby uniform, a long-service private in the glittering army of commissioners, deluges the theatre at the interval. The old man has long ago given up the attempt to keep the children in order; they yell greetings to one another, climb over the seats, run up and down the aisle at breakneck speed, and make an extraordinary number of visits to the Gents' and the Ladies'. The cinema might have been designed for them; its open-back seats are so narrow and closely-spaced that a normal adult sits with his knees either up to his chin or pressing into the person in front, his elbows digging into his neighbours. And each row of seats is

bolted together, so that when the children sway backwards and forwards together (Hiyo Silver!) everyone moves with them. Whether you like it or not, you're part of the audience at the Bug House.

The children come for sociability, for the raw material of their games, for bright words to decorate their conversation, even to have the future make promises to them—a house with a swimming-pool, a private aeroplane, a girl like Jane Russell. The old, who are, together with the children, the backbone of the audience, come for oblivion, gulping it down like strong tea. They're past the age for games and they know just what the future's promises are worth. They're quite content in the warm and noisy darkness, giving their feet and worries a rest; and for those who live alone, there's even the illusion of a sort of family life, the rowdy innocence of the children around them chasing away the feeling of being the only person left alive in the whole world.

The Bug House offers something else, though. It reduces films to their essentials, it knocks off their veneer. It not only underlines the impact of a first-rate film, it brings out the startling excellences scattered throughout the mediocre. Films seen there stick in the memory for years, the inward eye prizes details like the policeman's cape dripping with rain in the stuffy parlour, the graceful clumsiness and slow speed of a giraffe, the bearded soldier screaming like a fractious child under the boiling oil—one has been awarded moments of truth, instantaneous and exact descriptions of life and death and geography, of the huge variousness of existence.

For it's easy, in the plushy comfort of the super-cinema, to take the film for granted, as if it grew naturally out of the screen; we find nothing marvellous about the shining curves of a new Bentley being impelled by the ignition of petrol vapour. It's only when a Model T, square, frail, antique, chugs past us, shaking with the vehemence of its greed for movement, that we realise that internal combustion is a technical miracle. And perhaps it's only in cinemas like the Bug House that we capture the true flavour of the film, that, however blase we've become about it, we can, in that atmosphere so close to the sideshow and the nickelodeon of the industry's early days, suddenly perceive with a shock of delight that these shadows are telling us a story, that these pictures really move.

The Kitchen

Arnold Wesker

NOTES FOR THE PRODUCER

THE LENGTHY explanations I am forced to make may be annoying; I am sorry, but they are necessary.

This is a play about a large kitchen in a restaurant called the Tivoli. All kitchens, especially during service, go insane. There is the rush, there are the petty quarrels, grumbles, false prides and snobbery. Kitchen staff instinctively hate dining-room staff and all of them hate the customer. He is the personal enemy. The world might have been a stage for Shakespeare but to me it is a kitchen; where people come and go and cannot stay long enough to understand each other, and friendships, loves and enmities are forgotten as quickly as they are made.

The quality of the food here is not so important as the speed with which it is served. Each person has his own particular job. We glance in upon him, high-lighting as it were the individual. But though we may watch just one or a group of people, the rest of the kitchen staff does not. They work on.

So, because activity must continue while the main action is played out we shall study, together with a diagram of the kitchen, who comes in and what they do.

The waitresses spend the morning working in the dining-room before they eat their lunch. But throughout the morning there are about three or four who wander in and out carrying glasses from the glasserie to the dining-room. Others wander into the steam room emptying their buckets of water; they carry mops and they have scarves on their heads. One or two others perform duties which are mentioned in the course of the play. During the service the waitresses are continually coming out of the dining-room and ordering dishes from the cooks. The dishes are served on silver, and the waitresses

take about six plates out of the hot-plate immediately under the serving-counter. Stocks of plates are replenished all the time by the porters. These are highly efficient waitresses. They make a circuit round the kitchen calling at the stations they require. They move fast and carry large quantities of dishes in their arms.

The kitchen porters who are mixed of Cypriots and Maltese are divided into various sections. Firstly there are those who do the actual washing of cutlery, tins and plates by machine; these we do not see. But we do see the two porters by the swill. During the service the waitresses bring their dirty plates to the swill and these two porters push the remains of food into two holes leading to bins under the counter and push the dirty plate (out of sight) to the men at the machine. Two other porters continually replace clean plates under the serving counter so that the waitresses can take them as required. Another sweeps up at regular intervals and throws sawdust around.

The woman who serves the cheeses and desserts we hardly and rarely see through the glass partition back of stage, but every now and then she comes to the pastry section to replenish her supplies of tarts and pastries. The coffee woman simply supplies cups of coffee from an urn to the waitresses as they call for it.

Now to the cooks. At this point it must be understood that at no time is food ever used. To cook and serve food is of course just not practical. Therefore the waitresses will carry empty dishes and the cooks will mime their cooking. Cooks being the main characters in this play, I shall sketch them and their activity here, so that while the main action of the play is continuing they shall always have something to do. A.W.

RESUME OF ACT I

Throughout *The Kitchen*, the pace of the play is dictated by the rhythm of work. It begins in the early morning with the lighting of stoves and the preparation of food. As the first Act develops, so does the speed with which the men and women work. At the climax of the Act, the pace is so fast that cooks and waitresses appear almost to have ceased to be human beings and become cogs in a machine which serves food: the kitchen.

First Waitress (to Kevin). Me sole luvy, got me sole?
Kevin. Wait a minute can yer?

First Waitress. You should have it all ready paddy me boy. No time for breathing here. . . .

Kevin (still rushing around). Jesus is this a bloody mad-house or something? You all gone mad?

The Interlude coincides with the afternoon break, Act II with the evening meal.

In the first Act, the characters are introduced in groups: Peter, the central character, arrives late. Before his entrance, the conversation between the cooks reveals that, on the previous night, Peter and Gaston, the

Cypriot, had had a fight. The reason for the fight is never clear. "Who knows. There's always fights. Who knows how they begin". Part of the reason was because Peter is said to have called Gaston a "lousy Cypriote". The kitchen is, in fact, international—but throughout the play it is clear that some of the tension develops because of latent prejudices.

Bertha (nastily). You don't bloody hell me my son. You bloody hell in your own country. *(To others)* What d'you think of him eh? the little . . .

Nick. This is my country.

Bertha. The lavatory is your country.

Nick. The lavatory is *your* country and the sewers, you know that? The sewers!

Bertha (taking out another tray). I'll pay you sonny. You cross me once, that's all, just once. Lousy little foreigner you!

The kitchen also makes the cooks more callous than they are. When an accident occurs with boiling water, the Chef is not much concerned; although when the proprietor, Mr. Marango comes on the scene, the Chef pretends to care. But the Chef is right: Mr. Marango doesn't care either—unless it holds up the work. At one point, Peter expresses what they feel about Marango.

Peter. You think he is kind? He is a bastard! He talks like that because it is summer now. Not enough staff to serve all his customers, that is why he is kind. You going stay till winter? Wait till then, you'll see.

ACT II

Everyone has returned for the evening work. The waitresses have been served with their food, the cooks have settled down some five minutes ago to their own meal. As the curtain rises Paul and Raymond are in the last stages of their day's work. Michael, Kevin, Gaston and Hans are at the table near the pastry cooks. Alfredo and Peter are eating at Alfredo's usual spot. Frank, Max and Nicholas are seated as in the morning. The Chef is by his table writing. Some of the porters are leaning by the walls talking, one or two waitresses wander in or out. The coffee woman is eating with Bertha. Peter is lying with his head in his arms.

Alfredo (to Peter). You are not ill are you?

Peter (his head all the time in his arms). No.

Alfredo. Good! You have all your teeth?

Peter. Yes.

Alfredo. Good! You have good lodgings?

Peter. Yes.

Alfredo. You eat enough don't you?

Peter. Yes.

Alfredo. So tell me what you're unhappy for.

Peter (raising his head). Alfredo, you are a good cook uh? You come in the morning, you go straight to work, you ask nobody anything, you tell nobody anything. You are ready to start work before we are, you never panic. Tell me, is this a good house?

Alfredo (drily). Depends. It's not bad for Mr. Marango you know.

Michael (approaching Peter). Peter, give me a cigarette please! *(Peter does so, Michael stays on to listen).*

Alfredo. I'm an old man, It's finished for me. Mind you I've worked in places where I could do good cooking. But it doesn't matter now. Now I work only for the money.

As the work goes on, we see something of the strained relationship between Peter and Monique. Monique is married, and Peter is anxious that she should get a divorce. He is jealous of her, and watches her all the time.

Monique. Peter not here, please. I can't tell him yet.

Peter. Here—inside here *(knocks his head with his hand)* we do damage. We insult ourselves.

But in the final minutes of the Act, everything becomes unimportant in the face of the need to work, to serve up, to get the customers fed.

Second Waitress. Three dishes offish.

Peter (rushing around). Three dishes of fish.

Third Waitress. Are my six cod ready yet?

Peter. When did you order them?

Third Waitress. Five minutes ago. I came past and you were talking to Hans-remember?

Peter. I remember nothing. Come back in five minutes. Next?

Even here, however, Peter retains a frenzied form of his own humanity. The stage direction says:

He rushes like mad crying "and the next, the next!" They each give him their order. Meanwhile Hans dashes between his own station and Peter's. The whole tempo of work is speeded up suddenly . . . Orders are being shouted, every station has its share of waitresses. At this moment a queue has formed at Peter's station and he now rushes there laughing like a merry fool going into battle.

Michael. Quite right! A match Peter please.

Peter (to Michael, as he looks for matches). You like it here don't you? No, I got no matches.

Michael. The ovens, I love the sound of the ovens.

Peter. Idiot! He loves the sound of the ovens! You stand before them all day! They're red hot! You fry first a bit of ham and an egg in a tin; then someone orders an onion soup and you put soup and bread and cheese in another tin and you grill that. Then someone orders an omelette and you rush to do that; then someone throws you a hamburger and you fry that. You go up you go down you jump here you jump there; you sweat till steam comes off your back.

Michael (moving across to Nick for a light). I love it.

Peter (returning head to arms). Good luck to you.

Max (to Nick). What did you marry her for then?

Michael (bolding out his hand to Nick). Got a light Nick? *Nick (loudly—they are both drunk—as he feels for matches).* Because I love her, that's why. Ha! *(digs Frank)* did you hear that? Why did I marry her; Because I love her. And you? *(Hand Michael matches).* Here.

Max (enjoying his joke uproariously and also digging Frank).

Because she told me I was big for my age. (*When his laughter has died down*). Hey, did you read about the man who took a young girl into his house, his wife was there, and they all sat undressed watching television. His wife was there! With him! All undressed! Watching television! Frank (*drily, he is too drunk*). So what happened? They caught cold?

Michael (*wanders back to the third table*).

Kevin. I'll be taking my leave tonight by Christ.

Gaston. But you'll get used to it. It's good money.

At this point a waitress strolls up to listen.

Kevin. To hell with the money an' all. I like me pay but not for this. It's too big here man, it's high pressure all the time. An' the food! Look at the food! I never cooked so bad since I was in the army. An' no one is after caring much either!

Waitress. And what about the waitresses? We're the animals! Here, you know at the banquet the other day, when we had Ministroni soup . . .

Hans. Huh! Ministroni soup! A drop of meat stock and salt!

Waitress. . . . there were about ten of us, some extras as well. Well, the head waiter gave us the signal to get out plates and Oh my God the mad rush. Everybody pushing everybody else out of the way. Look (*shows arm*). One of the extras did it. It makes you an animal it does, I was telling my . . .

Hans (*to Kevin*). Marango will try to make you stay.

Kevin. Now there's a man. Have you watched him? One of the girls dropped some cups by there this morning and he cried 'me wages' he cried. 'All me wages down there.' And do take notice of the way he strolls among us all? I thought he'd a kind face but when he's done talking with you his kindness evaporates. In thin air it goes, sudden, and his face gets worried as though today were the last day and he had to be a closing for good and he were taking a last sad glance at everything going on. This mornin' he watched me a while and then walked away shaking his head as though I were dying and there was not a drop of hope for me left an' all.

Hans (*to Gaston*). What he has said?

Gaston laughs and digs Kevin. The waitress wanders away but not before she flirtatiously kisses Paul who has just strolled up.

Paul (*to those at the table*). Bon appetit.

Gaston. Paul, you got some cake?

Paul (*to Ray*). Ray, we got any cake? (*Ray brings some over*). (*To Hans*). You got over this morning yet?

Hans (*taking a cake Ray is offering round*). This morning, ach! He's a big fool that Max. He's like a dustbin.

Ray. So why you take notice? Look at them.

Frank is still eating, Max and Nicholas are standing up and pointing at each other in some sort of argument, waving fingers, pulling faces and swaying.

Ray. The first thing in the morning they come in and drink a bottle of beer. Then they're happy. All day they drink. (*Returns to work*).

Paul (*to Hans*). What did Max say then exactly?

Hans. He doesn't like I talk in German. (*Tragically*) You

know Paul you—you are a Jew and me—I'm a German; we suffer together. (*Nods his head to emphasise the sad situation*). We suffer together.

Paul (*laughs ironically, slaps Hans on the back and returns to his work*).

Kevin. Is that a Jew then?

Hans (*sentimentally*). A very good boy.

Kevin. Well who'd have thought that now.

At this point a tramp wanders into the kitchen. He is looking for the Chef. Everyone stares at him and grins.

Max (*shouting across to Bertha*). Bertha, ha, ha, is this your old man come after you? (*General laughter*).

The tramp comes over to the group of young men and talks to Kevin.

Tramp. 'Scuse me. The Chef please, which'n is he?

The Chef wanders slowly up to the man trying to assume an intimidating expression. He says nothing but merely raises his head questioningly.

Tramp. 'Scuse me Chef (*touching his knee*) war disabled, I don't usually ask for food but I lost me pensions book see? I don't like to ask but . . .

The Chef turns to Michael and points to the Soup, at the same time he says to a porter 'Clean a tin' and then returns to his place.

Tramp (*to Kevin*). Don't usually do this. Can't do anything till they trace me book. (*To Hans*). Got it in the desert, 'gainst Rommel.

Hans looks away. After an embarrassing few seconds silence Michael returns with a fruit tin full of soup and hands it to the tramp.

Tramp (*realising he hasn't received much tries again*). Got a cigarette?

Max. Go on, 'op it, be quick, we got work.

Peter (*goes up to tramp and looks in the tin. He takes tin from tramp and offers it to Max*). You drink it?

Max. Ah, get out of it, you and your high and bloody mighty gestures. I work for my living. Fool!

Peter ignores him and tosses the tin into the dustbin. Then he moves to Hans' station and brings back two meat cutlets which he gives to the tramp.

Peter. Take these cutlets. (*Gently pushing him*). Now go, quick, whist!

But he is not quick enough. The Chef approaches and stands looking on.

Chef (*quietly*). What's that?

Peter. I gave him some cutlets.

Chef (*still quietly*). Mr. Marango told you to give him?

Peter. No, but . . .

Chef. You heard me say perhaps?

Peter. No, I . . .

Chef. You have authority suddenly?

Peter (*impatiently*). So what's a couple of cutlets, we going bankrupt or something?

Chef. It's four and six that's what, and it's me who's Chef that's what and (*Peter moves away muttering 'ach'*).

The Chef follows him, annoyed now. Don't think we're too busy I can't sack you. Three years is nothing you know, you don't buy the place in three years, you hear me? You got that? Don't go thinking I won't sack you.

By this time Mr. Marango appears on his round, hands in pocket. Tramp finds this an opportunity to go. With a gesture of the head Marango asks what is the matter. Chef does not wish to make any more fuss.

Chef. The tramp, Peter gave him a cutlet, it was his own supper.

Chef returns to his work dispersing the crowd on the way. Mr. Marango simply nods his head at Peter. It is a sad nodding as though Peter had just insulted him. He walks from right of stage to the left in a half circle round Peter nodding his head all the time.

Marango (softly). Sabotage. (Pause). It's sabotage you do to me. (Sadly taking his right hand out of his pocket and waving it round the kitchen). It's my fortune here and you give it away. (He moves off muttering 'sabotage').

Peter. But it . . .

Marango (not even bothering to look round). Yes, yes, I'm always wrong—of course—yes, yes. (Moves off into dining room).

Everyone settles back into place. Peter goes to get a cup of coffee and makes faces at Marango's back; then he returns beside Alfredo. Hans joins them.

Hans. Er ist wirklich hinter Dir, her?

Peter. Ach, er erwartet dass die ganze welt auf seine kuche aufesst.

Peter. . . . aufpest.

Kevin. I seem to remember being told not to grumble by someone.

Peter. A bastard man. A bastard house.

Kevin. And he also said you could get used to anything.

Peter. But this house is like—is like—

Paul. Yeah? What is it like.

Peter. God in heaven I don't know what it's like. If only it—if only it—

Kevin. Yes, yes, we know all that—if only it would all go.

Peter. Just one morning—to find it gone.

Paul. Fat lot of good you'd be if it went—you could'n't even cough up a dream when it was necessary.

Peter. A dream?

Hans. Yes mein leiber—the dream, remember? You walked out on us.

Peter. A dream! (Thinks about it sadly). I can't dream in a kitchen.

As if to prove the point the work in the kitchen is heard extra loud. Monique comes front of stage and leans on centre of counter with a cup of coffee. Peter goes up to her. Michael and Hans wander back to their table.

Monique (with great sentimentality). Did you see that tramp. Isn't that a shame.

Peter. You didn't hear?

Monique. Hear what?

Peter (boasting and laughing). I had a row about him. Mr. Marango and the Chef there. They wanted to give him a dirty tin full of soup so I threw it away and gave him some cutlets.

Monique. Oh you didn't Peter . . . and Marango caught you.

Peter (imitating). 'Sabotage' the old man said. 'Sabotage, all my fortune you take away.'

Monique (pushing him playfully with her hand). Oh Peter! Peter (tenderly). I bought your birthday present.

Monique (placing her arm round his neck joyfully). Tell me, tell me, what is it uh? What is it?

Peter (taking her in his arms). You wait, yes?

Monique embraces him and her hand slips to his buttocks which she nips. They playfully struggle for a few seconds in which time another waitress passes them and takes Monique's hand off Peter's behind and places it on his shoulders, crying 'now then Monique, watch it!'

Monique (coily replacing her hand). But it's nice.

Peter. Can you eat me?

Monique. Oh don't be silly, Peter.

Peter. How do you want me? Grilled? Fried? Under-done? Well done?

While Peter and Monique continue to talk affectionately a sudden cry comes up from the back of the kitchen. That waitress who has just passed Peter and Monique has doubled up in pain and passed out. A crowd rushes to her—it all happens very quickly, hardly noticed. The boys at the table simply glance round and watch but do not move. Peter and Monique do not even hear it. We can only hear a few confused voices.

First Voice. What's happened?

Second Voice. Winnie has passed out.

Third Voice. Alright now don't crowd round, take her into the dining room. Don't crowd round. (Crowd disperses as Winnie is taken into dining room).

Kevin. Well what was all that now?

Gaston. The heat. Always affecting someone. Terrible. Meanwhile . . .

Peter (to Monique). Did you—er—you still going to do it. I mean I . . .

Monique. Don't worry, Peter, I shall see to it now. It's not the first time is it?

Peter. You don't think we should go through with it? I don't mind being responsible, you know that.

Monique. Enough, I'm not going to talk about it any more.

Peter. You told Monty about us then?

Monique (finishing her coffee). You really must stop rowing with Marango darling.

Peter. Did you speak to Monty as we said?

Monique. They won't stand it all the time you know. I'm always telling you about this Peter.

Peter. Listen Monique, I love you. Please listen to me that I love you. You said you love me but you don't say to your husband this thing.

Monique. Now not this again.

Peter. You are not going to leave him are you? You don't really intend it?

Monique. Oh Peter please.

Peter. What do you want I should do then?

Monique. Did the Chef say much?

Peter. We could leave any day. We could go for a Ion holiday first. Ski-ing in Switzerland perhaps.

Monique. I am going to the hairdresser tomorrow as well.

Peter. Monique, we row this morning, we row in the afternoon too, this evening we are almost in love again . . . Answer me.

Monique. Monty has promised we shall soon have our own house.

Peter (screaming). MONIQUE!

Monique looks round in embarrassment and, muttering 'you fool', stalks off. A waitress approaches Peter.

Waitress. You serving yet Peter? I want three turbot. Special for Marango.

Peter. It's half past six yet?

Waitress. It's nearly . . .

Peter. Half past six is service.

Waitress. But it's special . . .

Peter. HALF PAST SIX!

Peter goes off to find some beer. Service is just beginning. Evening service is not so hectic and takes a longer time to start up. Waitresses appear, most people are at their stations, the people at the table near the pastry station are just rising.

Kevin. Me. I'd have a Jaguar. It's got a luxury I could live with.

Gaston. Have you seen the new French Citroen? Just like a mechanical frog it looks.

Hans. And the Volkswaggon? It's not a good car?

Kevin. Now there's a good little car for little money.

Hans. No country makes like the Volkswaggon.

Kevin. You've gotta hand it to the German.

Peter has returned with a bottle of beer. He cries out his laughter and sings his song. More waitresses are coming in but the service is easy and orders ring out in comfort. One waitress, however, breaks her journey round the kitchen and, wiping some plates which she has just taken from the hot plate, goes up to the Chef to gossip. Max and Nicholas stand by listening.

Waitress. Heard what happened to Winnie? She's been rushed to hospital.

Max. What did she do wrong then?

Waitress. She was pregnant.

Max. She didn't look it.

Waitress. I know. She didn't give herself a chance.

Chef. Misfired?

Waitress. I'll say, and it weren't no accident neither.

Max (shaking his head). Silly woman, silly woman.

Chef. She's got seven children already though.

Waitress. That's right. Marango's hopping mad. It started happening on the spot, in there, in the dining room. May and Sophie had to take her away.

Max. What did she do then?

Waitress. She took pills that's what. And I'll tell you something else, there are four other girls here took the same pills. There! Four of them! And you know who one of the four is? (She inclines her head in Peter's direction).

Max. Monique?

Waitress (nodding her head triumphantly). Now don't you tell anyone I told you mind. But you ask Hettie ask her, she bought the stuff. (Continues on the round).

Max. Knew this would happen. Knew it! Can't be done though. What makes them think that by taking a tablet through the mouth it'll affect the womb? There is only one way, the way it went in! What happens with a tablet? Nothing! Nothing can. The stomach is irritated that's all, squeezed see? Forces the womb, presses it.

Nicholas. Now what do you know about this? A doctor now!

Max. Oh I know about this alright. Only one drug is effective through the mouth. (Secretively). And you know what that is? Ergot! Heard of it? Only thing to do it. And that's rare. Oh yes. I studied this in the forces when I had nothing else to do. Very interesting this psychology Complicated. I knew Winnie was pregnant soon as she came here.

All this time the pastry cooks have been clearing away their station and are now ready to go. They are saying goodbye to everyone. Max shouts to them as they go.

Max. Some people have it easy!

The pastrycooks leave and as they do so an argument flares up suddenly as Peter's station. Peter takes a silver plate with fish in it out of a waitress' hand and smashes it to the floor. She had just helped herself to her order while Peter had been busy and his back turned.

Peter. You wait for me yes? I serve you. You ask me.

Waitress. But you were busy.

Peter. I don't care. This is my place and there (points to the side of bar) there is for you.

Waitress. Now you wait a bloody minute will you? Who the hell do you think you are, you?

Peter. You don't worry who I am. I'm a cook yes? And you're the waitress, and in the kitchen you do what I like yes? And in the dining room you do what you like. Waitress (taking another plate off the oven). I won't take orders from you you know, I . . .

Peter (shouting and smashing the plate from her hand for a second time). Leave it! Leave it there! I'll serve you. Me! Me! Is my kingdom here. This is the side where I live. This.

Waitress. You Bosch you. You bloody German bastard! She downs plates on the bar and walks off. Peter follows her. There is a general uproar and protest from the other waitresses who are impatient to be served.

Peter. What you call me? What was it? Say it again. (But she has gone right off into the dining room. He screams at her). SAY IT AGAIN!

This scream calls the attention of most people to him. They all stare at him as at a frightened animal. Peter stands aroused left back of stage, with his back to the audience. Suddenly he wheels round and in a frenzy searches for something violent to do. First he darts forward, then stops; then he rushes to his right and stops again. Then with a cry of 'auf geitse' he dashes to a part under the serving counter near Michael and picking up a chopper from the bar smashes something underneath. There is a slow hiss and all the fires of the oven die down. There is a second of complete silence before anybody realises what has happened and then Frank and two others are upon him trying to hold him down. The Chef, at last moved to do something rushes to the scene but Peter breaks away and flees to the dining room. Frank and others follow. All this has happened too quickly for anyone to do a great deal about it but in the scuffle the following cries were heard:

Michael. He's broken the gas lead! Someone turn off the main!

Frank. Hold him, grab hold of him!

Kevin. Jesus Christ he'll murder her.

Hans. Sei nicht dumm! Beherrsche Dish! Lass sie laufen! When Peter has rushed into the dining room there is another silence as everybody waits to hear what will happen next. Some are not even sure what has already happened. A crowd has gathered by the glass partition through which can be seen the dining room. Suddenly there is a tremendous crash of crockery to the ground. Some waitresses and, presumably customers scream. Kevin. Holy mother O' Mary he's gone beserk.

Gaston. The lunatic! He's swept all the plates off the table in there.

Michael (who is one of the crowd by the glass partition moves away down to the front of stage). He's ripped his hands.

Kevin. I knew something like this would happen, now I just knew it. When you take away a man's dignity he is fighting mad. Can you see that now? Can you understand it now?

The crowd by the entrance to the dining room make way as Frank Alfredo and Hans bring Peter back. Peter's hands are covered in blood. Some smears have reached his face. He looks terribly exhausted. They bring him downstage. Michael hurriedly finds a stool.

Chef (to Michael). Phone an ambulance.

Waitress. Monique is doing that now.

Monique pushes through the crowd. She is sobbing but she carries the medical box and a table cloth. Alfredo snatches the cloth from her and rips it up. She tries to dab some liquid on Peter's hands, he jumps. This is too much for her, she leaves it all and rushes away. Alfredo, however, simply takes Peter's hands and lies them up.

Peter. It hurts, Christ it hurts.

Alfredo. Shut up!

Chef (bending close to Peter). Fool! (He straightens up and finding nothing else to say for the moment bends down to repeat again). Fool! (Pause). So? What? The whole kitchen is stopped. Fool!

Peter (to Alfredo). Now he cares.

Chef (incredulous and furious). What do you mean, 'now he cares?'

Alfredo (gently moving Chef out of the way that he might tie up Peter's hands). Leave him Chef, leave him now.

Chef (reaching Peter another way). What do you mean 'now he cares'? You have to make me care? Forty years and suddenly you have to make me care? You? You? Who are you tell me? In all this big world who are you for Christ's sake?

At this point the crowd breaks away to let Marango in. He looks like a man who has just lost all his money at the stock exchange, as though he might have a fit. At first he is unable to speak. All he does is gesticulate with his arms in the air showing Peter what he has done.

Marango. You have stopped my whole world. (Pause). Did you get permission from God? Did you? (He looks to the others perhaps they heard God give Peter permission. Then to Peter). There-is-no-one-else! You know that? NO ONE!

Frank (taking Marango's shoulder). Alright, take it easy Marango. The boy is going, he's going. He's ill, don't upset yourself.

Marango (turning to Frank and making a gentle appeal.) Why does everybody sabotage me Frank? I give work, I pay well yes? They eat what they want don't they? I don't know what more to give a man. He works, he eats, I give him money. This is life isn't it? I haven't made a mistake have I? I live in the right world don't I? (To Peter). And you've stopped this world. A shnip! A boy! You've stopped it. Well why? Maybe you can tell me something I don't know—just tell me. (No answer). I want to learn something. (To Frank). Is there something I don't know? (Peter rises and in pain moves off. When he reaches a point back centre stage Marango cries at him). BLOODY FOOL! (Rushes round to him). What more do you want? What is there more tell me? (He shakes Peter but gets no reply. Peter again tries to leave. Again Marango cries out). What is there more? (Peter stops, turns in pain and sadness shakes his head as if to say—if you don't know I cannot explain. And so he moves right off stage. Marango is left facing his staff who stand around, almost accusingly, looking at him. And he asks again) What is there more? What is there more?

We have seen that there must be something more and so the lights must slowly fade.

Yugoslavia Revisited

Michael Barratt Brown

Early this year the New Reassurer was invited by the Yugoslav Press Attache in London to send a member of the Editorial Board to visit Yugoslavia this summer as a guest of the Government. Michael Barratt Brown, who was selected to go, spent nearly three years in the country with the Yugoslav mission of UNRRA from 1944–1947. He spent just over three weeks in Yugoslavia, travelled 2,500 miles by road, rail and sea through four of the six republics and visited a wide range of mines, factories, power stations, farms, co-operatives, housing communities and committees at every level from the Federal Government to the smallest parish. The article that follows is the first of two; the second will deal in greater detail with the functioning of Workers' Councils within the planned economy.

The Yugoslavs are what they are because of their whole past history, not merely because of the history of the last ten years. Indeed, they suffer like other unhappy lands that lie on the marches of great Empires from having too much history. To have broken the 'chain of blood'⁽¹⁾, to have united the South Slav peoples and thus freed themselves from the trammels of their past—this is the first supreme achievement of the Yugoslav communists.

Once again the Yugoslavs stand uneasily between East and West. No one who knew them well should really have expected them to fit in compliantly with Stalin's plans for Soviet-Yugoslav joint stock companies for developing Yugoslavia's economy or to accept slavishly the Soviet model for every aspect of their political life or to come to heel when the Cominform condemned them. Nor should we have expected that in seeking aid from the West they would have made any important concessions.

It is one of the advantages of sitting between East and West that the Yugoslavs have drawn upon the knowledge and experience of all countries in their development. They have most sensibly used a considerable part of their foreign currency earnings to send their own experts to study and attend conferences abroad. From the Russians they learnt the essentials of planning and applied this in their first Five Year Plan to develop their basic heavy industries—steel, coal and power—to get them over the hump of the industrial revolution. From the west they have since learnt to leave the market for consumer goods sufficiently free and competitive to give real consumer choice. From the Russians they learnt to make sensible, sturdy machines to last; from the West they have learnt the value of style and line.

The result is that the cars which they manufacture under licence from Fiat, the tractors and farm imple-

ments which they build under licence from Massey Harris are solid, serviceable products that have a good line. It is the same with their buildings, furniture and clothing. Their architects are well acquainted with the most advanced work in the West and have developed really imaginative use of shapes, colours and patterns of light and shade in glass and concrete, while their engineers have adapted the best Russian building techniques. Furniture is solid, but beautifully designed having the clean lines and craftsman's feel for materials of the best Finnish and Swedish work. Their clothes are well cut—Italian designers have been employed by many clothing factories—but they are also made to wear well. The traditional feel of the peasant for good material and fine colours has not been lost, as it so often is, in the industrial revolution. The one tragedy is that the haunting peasant songs so beautifully sung in the mountains and on the coast are being insidiously eroded by the tin-pan rhythm of Elvis Presley and his like on the radio and in the cinemas. In the memorials to the Partisans which have been raised in nearly every town and village and which have given glorious opportunities to young sculptors and architects there is often an astonishing mixture of modern abstract forms and a socialist realism in the figures that never quite descends to the vulgar heroics of the Russians. The magazine *Jugoslavia*, which is by far the most beautifully printed and produced of the sumptuous Socialist Glossies, combines a respect for the best in Yugoslavia's past with an interest in contemporary experiment that is truly refreshing. At the same time it must be said that there remains from the Soviet period a certain rigidity in the cultural apparatus—payment of writers according to quantity of output, etc.

One of the fascinating aspects of Yugoslavia's east-west position is the press reporting of world news. One may read in columns side by side the report of Tass or Pravda and of the Associated Press or New York Times on the same event. This is sometimes highly amusing: I had much pleasure from reading the varying accounts of Mr. Nixon's meetings with Mr. Krushchov while I was in Yugoslavia. This dual approach certainly clarifies the mind wonderfully and leaves the reader convinced of the inanity of both the blocs.

The Yugoslavs should not, I believe, be thought of as a bridge or as mediators between East and West. They are neither by history nor temperament suited for such a role. Their attitude to West and East is "a plague on both your houses!" and the object of their foreign policy the breaking up rather than the bridging of the rigid blocs on either side. It is an obvious deduction from their own history!

But while they see no possibility of co-existence between the blocs, the whole emphasis of their outlook on foreign

⁽¹⁾ The phrase is Milovan Djilas's. In his magnificent autobiography, *Land without Justice*, which should be read by all who wish to understand the Yugoslav people. He is writing of the vendettas of the Montenegrin clans.

affairs, as laid down in the Programme of the League of Yugoslav Communists and confirmed in talks I had at the semi-official Institute for International Politics and Economy, is on the great possibilities of developing multilateral co-operation between all countries irrespective of systems, through a policy of "active co-existence". I was anxious to discover what this meant in practical terms. I give three examples. Professor Popovich, the deputy secretary for Foreign Trade, emphasised to me the special importance of maintaining the post-war rate of expansion of world trade through international economic aid programmes. Trade Union leaders spoke of the necessity for closing the divisions in the world Labour movement—not through some new international or new world Trade Union movement, but through developing multilateral contacts. The Yugoslavs are certainly doing their bit here. With their very limited resources of foreign exchange they are being extraordinarily generous in paying for foreign delegates to visit their country and in paying for their people to attend foreign gatherings. And their approach is not at all the conducted tour approach. To take my own example, I was given a car, though cars are very scarce, and went where I liked, choosing my companions as I went along, only making my arrangements through the Information Office. The moral of this internationalism in action needs to be learnt by our own Labour Movement.

A United People

This Yugoslav approach to international relations arises from their own remarkable sense of unity. It does not reflect a division between eastward and westward looking Yugoslavs. The unity built during the war survived, was indeed strengthened by, the Cominform issue. Stalin's heavy fisted methods undoubtedly helped, but it was none the less remarkable that no real centre of resistance to Tito ever developed at all. On the wider issues between Russia and the West it is perhaps even more remarkable that divisions are so small. The Slovenes, who are as westward looking as the Austrians, might well have pulled westward; and the Croats with them. While the Serbs, who have traditionally looked to Mother Russia for their help, might well have pulled the other way. There seems to be little evidence that either pull in fact took place. One explanation given to me was that the Serbs saw the Red Army at much closer quarters than the others; and that the Slovenes and Croats have had to put up with the boorishness of nearly a quarter of a million German and Austrian tourists in their cafes and hotels and on their roads and beaches each summer!

It is probably true that the pressure of a common enemy, first German and then Russian, seeming for the first time to work against the whole and not a part of the population has strengthened the unity of the Yugoslavs. At the same time, their loneliness first in the partisan war against the Germans and Italians and now between East and West has enormously aggravated their proud and independent spirit. This pride takes strange forms. Expen-

diture on the armed forces which rose in 1952 to a quarter of the gross national product remains at a level of no less than a sixth. This is of course where most of the American aid has gone. Every peasant argues from history that you need to be strong to stay independent.

At higher levels I was reminded of Hungary and the revanchistes in Austria, but when I asked why the Russians hadn't invaded in 1948 and whether any invasion could be mounted except where the government was utterly discredited and the people divided I was given more sophisticated answers. Before the six-year school was introduced in every village most of the country people were illiterate and ignorant of personal hygiene. The army taught them to read and write, to clean their teeth and cut their toenails and often started them in a trade. In this way the men of the villages were prepared for the industrial revolution, for the movement from the overcrowded land to the new factories in the towns which is taking place throughout the country. Furthermore, I was told, the factories which had supplied all the needs of the forces were now turning out clothes and boots and lorries and machines for the civil market. I did not visit any, but I do not doubt that the wages and conditions in these factories are as good as any elsewhere, which is what I was assured.

The maintenance of a huge military force in Yugoslavia may well seem to be the main concession made to the west, but it is clearly a concession willingly and indeed enthusiastically made by the overwhelming majority of the people. This became the more remarkable to me as I came to notice the ubiquitousness of the army—by the side of a beautiful new hospital an army hospital, opposite the new community centre of a village the new army house, just below the new tourist skiing hotel the army skiing centre. Everywhere it was the same and on the roads in the mountains tanks and jeeps and self-propelled guns held one up for hours at a time. Yet only the young intellectuals protested. For many of the students to whom I talked the army was just a ridiculous piece of antiquated Balkan bragadoccio. "Primitivism", they called it, "in a nuclear age".

If the first bane of the Yugoslavs between the wars was communal hatred and disunity, the second was lack of economic development, despite rich resources of timber and minerals and waterpower. Yugoslavia was a predominantly agricultural country most of the land being owned and worked by individual peasant cultivators. These ranged from very rich peasants with several hundred acres of fertile land on the Danubian plain to the poor Montenegrin scraping a meagre living from the rocky soil of the southern karst. Grain was exported from the rich lands while the peasants of the poor lands starved. Four fifths of the bread was baked with maize flour. Pellagra was a common disease. Moreover, even the peasants in the rich lands suffered from the scissors of falling world grain prices and rising prices of manufacturers. And the price scissors led to much hostility

between town and country. In 1938 there were about 300,000 workers in industry and the same number of handicraftsmen. More than half the capital in industry was foreign owned and nearly all in the important metal mining sector. The average national income per head was under £50 per year, much the same as in Hungary or Spain, a little lower than in Czecho-Slovakia; a little higher than in Poland or Bulgaria.

In 1945 industry was nationalised, and no private person was permitted to employ more than five workers. (This law remains in force today.) By 1946 with the help of UNRRA aid production had been restored to pre-war levels. A grandiose Five Year Plan on the Soviet model was then introduced for the period 1947–51 with the target of doubling the national income and increasing industrial production fivefold. The Plan was fantastically detailed, itemising for example the number of restaurant meals to be served in five years' time in each republic, the number of passenger journeys to be made on the railways, the number of letters to be written and telegrams to be sent. By the end of 1948 the 1946 levels in most industries had in fact been doubled. At this point the break with the Cominform led to the blockade of Yugoslavia by the other East European countries. The Plan which had relied on key imports of machinery and other manufactures from these countries collapsed. How far the Plan could have been made to work but for the break is hard to say. Bottle-necks were already appearing before the break and difficulties in finding the exports with which to pay for machinery imports were already the subject of complaints from trading partners.

The years from 1949 to 1952 were years of great difficulty for the Yugoslavs. The whole basis of planning the economy was reconsidered. Trade was re-oriented. Industries to make the machines that could no longer be imported were slowly and painfully built up. Agriculture was first collectivised and then returned to peasant ownership. The result was that industrial output actually fell back slightly in these years, and agriculture stagnated. I saw several factories and power stations where the first machines had been installed in 1948 and the next stage not completed until 1953 or 1954.

In 1952 a new constitution was published for nationwide discussion and formally adopted early in 1953. Under this constitution government was completely decentralised and the ownership of industry passed to the communes, that is the town and rural district authorities. Wide powers were given to workers councils in industry, transport and every other kind of enterprise.

An Industrial Revolution

The expansion of the economy from 1952 to 1956 was considerable. Industrialisation was continued at a rapid pace so that by 1956 industrial output was at three times the pre-war level. About half a million workers had left the land for the towns, and the agrarian population accounted for 58 per cent of the total instead of 77 per cent before the war. Although agricultural output still lagged, the rise over pre-war being less than ten per cent,

the result of the industrial expansion was that the national income was raised by 50 per cent over 1938. A great part of the increase had been in basic heavy industry—fuel and power, steel and capital equipment, with much lesser increases in consumption goods. At the end of 1957 a new Five Year Plan of economic development was introduced, which gives special emphasis to increasing agricultural output and to the growth of social and public services—schools, housing, health and public utilities. By the end of 1961 it is planned to raise the national income by somewhat more than another 50 per cent over 1956 (with industrial output up 60 per cent and agriculture up 40 per cent). This is about the same rate of growth as in the other Eastern European countries.

The purely practical problems involved in carrying through an industrial revolution are immense. Just to house the new workers is a formidable problem, which has led to the greatest difficulties in Yugoslavia. To drive through the country today is to travel from one construction site to another. The large existing towns are spreading outwards in all directions; Belgrade is a city of half a million people, Zagreb nearly as large, while Ljubljana, Sarajevo and Skopje have over 150,000 inhabitants. Sleepy little Bosnian market towns like Tuzla and Zenica have now a population of over 70,000 huge blocks of flats, shops, schools, and buildings for health and welfare services rising up the hillside on the opposite side of the town from the iron, steel and engineering works. Villages have been transformed into townships, like Loznica in Western Serbia, where a huge new rayon factory has been built on the edge of the Bosnian forests. New towns have been built, to the most beautiful plans and designs, like Velenje in Soovenia around a new coal mine and thermal power station, which are almost completely automated. Yet there is still an appalling shortage of housing everywhere.

The human problems involved in an industrial revolution are even more difficult of solution than the practical problems. Here the Yugoslav system of decentralisation seems to me to have immense advantages. First, the devolution of responsibility to local authorities means that the knowledge and help of a wide range of experts gets called in at the point of actual execution, where it can be well tempered by local tradition and public demand. A very good example I found was the use of the Sociology departments of universities on surveys of labour mobility—of the problems raised by workers who still retained their peasant holdings, families that remained in the villages when the men went to work in the towns and all the other problems of adjustment to town life for a peasant family. Secondly, decentralisation creates the conditions for a developing sense of community. The Yugoslavs draw attention to the contrast between the blocks of flats in the great Soviet cities, which are built without communal facilities, and their own housing communities. In these, the flats are built around a group of communal buildings—school; nursery, restaurant, clubs for young and old, shops, etc. Where you find a one-factory town the community will be a factory com-

munity. In the larger towns and cities, however, the communities are mixed and the result is wholly beneficial. The third point is the existence of elected councils of producers at every level of government—commune, district, republic and federation—which were introduced under the new constitution to work side by side with the elected popular councils. Representation on the producers' councils is according to the value of the contribution of enterprises to the national income. This gives to the working class the leadership in the community, but it also brings together at all levels of government the peasants and the workers in industry, transport, distribution, etc.

Indeed the rise in the standard of living of the poor peasants struck me most forcibly. Sokolac in the Romanija uplands of Bosnia was my tally. I had watched it rebuilt upon burnt out ruins in the first two years after the war—groups of log cabins, a brick building for the food store and village council, the church roof repaired and the worst holes in the road filled in for UNRRA lorries to bring in. UNRRA food and seed and tools. This is what I remember and apart from the shortage of local meat it was regarded as recovery to pre-war standards.

Today there is an eight-year school for the children of the whole neighbourhood, where before the war there was 75 per cent illiteracy (50 per cent throughout the country). There is a large and modern hospital where there was none. There is a smart modern restaurant and hotel where before there was a dirty kafana. The peasants eat wheaten bread, not maize, and this is true throughout the country. Along the main street stone buildings are going up for shops, offices, flats, garages, warehouses in place of the wooden houses I knew. There are cattle in the fields and a proper cattle market and there is a veterinary surgeon who visited the Royal Show at Norwich last year. I looked back on the days when I used to go out from Sarajevo with workers and doctors and nurses to do 'Sunday work', the town helping the country, and realised how far the gap between town and country had been closed. The youth of the village came out from their club to greet me wearing jeans and sweaters and some of them carrying umbrellas. Several spoke English and, as everywhere else, I was bombarded with questions about England, about the angry young men, about John Osborne and Colin Wilson. What on earth are we to say about this among children who were born in the most backward part of one of the most backward countries of mid-Twentieth Century Europe?

Free Criticism

The young intellectuals, and there are many, as the university population has increased fivefold since the war, are outspoken critics, in the best sense, of everything. With them you can not only discuss "how?" and "what?" but also "why?" They question everything and especially their own positions in Yugoslav society. There is no money, they say, except in industry. The middle classes, they complain, are being squeezed. They have to do two jobs. They can't get flats. They can't afford to have

children (abortion is legal). But who are these "middle-class" intellectuals? I asked one group who were talking in this way and found that six out of seven came from poor peasant or working-class homes. Before the war few of them could have dreamt of getting to a university. They would have been tending sheep or humping timber. The freedom with which these youngsters, and their elders too, make their criticisms signal one of the most remarkable changes since I was last in the country in 1947. Then spy mania was rampant with all the associated horrors of interrogating, denouncing and victimising ordinary innocent citizens. Decent people would not dare to visit the homes of friendly members of the UNRRA mission, like ourselves, for fear of arrest, imprisonment and loss of employment. Worse was to come, following the Cominform criticism in 1948. Critics from the left and from the right, old Social democrats and Stalinists, white Russians and Anglo-philés, rich peasants and poor Jews were jumbled together in mass arrests committed to jail often without trial and driven by every means of forcible 'persuasion' to make the confessions that were required of them. This all seems to have ended after the Congress of 1952, and most political prisoners were amnestied in 1954. The régime had by then survived the attacks of the west and of the east and could afford to be tolerant.

What About Djilas?

The famous articles* which Milovan Djilas, at one time the closest man to Tito, wrote in *Barbe* at Christmas time in 1953 (*Recently reprinted by Thames and Hudson under the title of the article which rocked Belgrade by exposing the snobberies and privileges of the new social élite—*Anatomy of a Moral*) led to his expulsion from the Vice-Presidency of the Government, from the Central Committee of the League of Yugoslav Communists and finally from the League itself. His book *The New Class* resulted in his arrest, trial and imprisonment. Djilas began by criticising the bureaucracy and corruption in the Communist leadership, but went on in the name of freedom and democracy to call for the end of single party leadership in the state. Djilas never, however, tried to build up a fraction or a new Party. His individualism often alienated even his best friends, and his book, with its extolling of the virtues of western social democracy, must be regarded as risible by socialists who know social democracy at closer quarters.

The sensitiveness of the Yugoslav Communists to the challenge of a second party can be seen in the recent trial and imprisonment of a couple of elderly Belgrade social democrats, who had become the centre of some outspoken criticism of the government. Criticisms are in fact widespread and freely aired. Yet few—even among the most critical intellectuals—seem to be prepared to protest at Djilas's imprisonment or at the continued victimisation of Vladimir Dedijer, who was Djilas's sole defender on the Central Committee. These injustices are accepted as inevitably in the nature of things. Many of Djilas's criticisms however, have been acted on: the

special officer's shop and other privileges for the communist elite have been ended; dogma is open to criticism; the legality of administrative and police actions is being insisted on; bureaucracy is under attack in every field of government. Illegal and bureaucratic actions still occur, especially at lower levels, but they are now no longer regarded as the same.

To read again Djilas's articles after travelling through the country as I did is to undergo a strange experience. Again and again I remember hearing warning phrases about the dangers of privilege, illegality and bureaucracy and about the need for more and more democracy, stronger decentralisation and a greater spread of authority and responsibility, which I now realise were an exact echo of Djilas's words. It is almost as if the brave Montenegrin in the jail at Mitrovica is held as a hostage for the conscience of the Yugoslav communists. While he is there, they know that they must so act that they give no ground for the charge that his criticisms remain true. Is this perhaps what Djilas wished—a martyrdom like that of his comrades killed in battle that others might live in “a natural, popular, lawful and open society” where “simple people shall freely arrange mutual relations?” The fact is that even Djilas's best friends and supporters, like Vladimir Dedijer, would not want preoccupation with Djilas's position to obscure from Socialists in the west the very real freedom of thought and expression which now obtains in Yugoslavia or the very great progress which the Yugoslavs are making towards a truly democratic socialism.

A Society in Transition

Yugoslavia is a society in transition—in transition from old communal hatreds to new national unity, from peasant, even tribal, village to modern industrial town, from dictatorship and police rule to democratic self-government. It is also going through another transition—from the heroics of resistance, war and reconstruction to the more hum-drum arts of peaceful living. In all this transition some of the good things of the old are bound to be lost, although we must remember that the picture of a happy, singing peasantry, free, unspoilt and independent, dancing kolas in folk costume seemed to be more idyllic to the visitor like Rebecca West than to the peasants themselves. And distance lends enchantment. The comradeship and heroism of the war is remembered; the misery and brutality happily forgotten. Many evil things occur in the process of transition—the drunkenness and squalor of the overcrowded old towns where men, separated from the ties of village, home and family, have not yet found a new sense of community, the jungle battle for priority in housing, the spiv and the speculator exploiting every gap in the law and every shortage in supplies.

If the heart of the people is sound, if the leadership is wise and uncorrupted and if the system in general works against these evil things, then the transition can only be for the good. Among the people very much depends on the

youth, for the war wiped out almost a whole generation in the loss of one in every ten of the population. I have already given some impressions of the youth. They are being widely educated and as far as I could see extraordinarily well-educated. They are for good and ill open to all the influences of West and East. They are fundamentally serious about the world, if a little cynical about its leaders including their own. They have little respect for past reputations that do not carry present ability. What then of the leaders?

Tito is a sick man, retired now to the rôle of head of the state, receiving foreign diplomats and giving only the most general leadership to the members of the Executive Council, as the Government is now called. To all intents and purposes, Kardelj is Prime Minister, Rankovich Party, or rather League, secretary. They and their colleagues are young men who rose in the ranks of the Partisans in the 1940's. Their reputations in the country still stand very high. It is at the lower levels that I heard of a certain hardening of the arteries among the old comrades. What I found myself was a strange situation. The role of the communists actually seems as confused as the statements about it are in the League Programme, but while they still hold a monopoly of political power, the League works in a much less centralised and mono-lithic way. There is not the rigid Party line that there was, and clearly some comrades at lower levels are lost without it. This leads to bureaucratic, opportunist and unprincipled actions. I felt, for example, most unhappy at the argument that defended Elvis Presley and American films in terms of “giving the people what they want”. In industry and the economy generally the test of consumers' preferences can be made to work. Can it in the arts?

The decentralised system of government as a whole which the Yugoslavs have forged depends entirely on the reality of participation at the base. In the present stage of transition the building of industry is the vital force. It is here that the best men are concentrated; and it is here in the experiment of workers councils that the new Yugoslavia is being born. This will be the subject of the next article.

Can Negroes Afford to To Be Pacifists?

Robert F. Williams

Reprinted from "Liberation"

IN 1954 I was an enlisted man in the United States Marine Corps. As a Negro in an integrated unit that was overwhelmingly white, I shall never forget the evening we were lounging in the recreation room watching television as a news bulletin flashed on the screen. This was the historic Supreme Court decision that segregation in the public schools was unconstitutional. Because of the interracial atmosphere, there was no vocal comment. There was for a while complete silence. I never knew how the Southern white boys felt about this bulletin. Perhaps I never will, but as for myself, my inner emotions must have been approximate to the Negro slaves' when they first heard about the Emancipation Proclamation. Elation took hold of me so strongly that I found it very difficult to refrain from yielding to an urge of jubilation. I learned later that night that other Negroes in my outfit had felt the same surge of elation.

On this momentous night of May 17, 1954, I felt that at last the government was willing to assert itself on behalf of first-class citizenship, even for Negroes. I experienced a sense of loyalty that I had never felt before. I was sure that this was the beginning of a new era of American democracy. At last I felt that I was a part of America and that I belonged. That was what I had always wanted, even as a child.

I returned to civilian life in 1955 and the hope I had for Negro liberation faltered. I had returned to a South that was determined to stay the hand of progress at all cost. Acts of violence and words and deeds of hate and spite rose from every quarter. An attitude prevailed that Negroes had a court decree from the "Communist inspired court", but the local racist had the means to initiate the old law of the social jungle called Dixie. Since the first Negro slaves arrived in America, the white supremacists have relied upon violence as a potent weapon of intimidation to deprive Negroes of their rights. The Southerner is not prone to easy change; therefore the same tactics that proved so successful against Negroes through the years are still being employed today. There is open defiance to law and order throughout the South today. Governor Faubus and the Little Rock campaign was a shining example of the Southern racists' respect for the law of the land and constituted authority.

The State of Virginia is in open defiance of federal authority. States like my native state of North Carolina are submitting to token integration and openly boasting that this is the solution to circumvention of the Supreme Court decisions. The officials of this state brazenly slap themselves on the back for being successful in depriving great numbers of their coloured citizens of the rights of first-class citizenship. Yes, after having such great short-

lived hope, I have become disillusioned about the prospect of a just, democratic-minded government motivated by politicians with high moral standards enforcing the Fourteenth Amendment without the pressure of expediency.

Since my release from the Marine Corps I could cite many cases of unprovoked violence that have been visited upon my people. Some, like the Emmett Till case, the Asbury Howard case and the Mack Parker incident, have been widely publicized. There are more, many many more, occurring daily in the South that never come to the light of the press because of a news blackout sponsored by local racist officials.

Laws serve to deter crime and to protect the weak from the strong in civilised society. When there is a breakdown of law and the right of equal protection by constituted authority, where is the force of deterrent? It is the nature of people to respect law when it is just and strong. Only highly civilised and moral individuals respect the rights of others. The low-mentality bigots of the South have shown a wanton disregard for the well-being and rights of their fellowmen of colour, but there is one thing that even the most savage beast respects, and that is force. Soft, polished words whispered into the ears of a brute make him all the more confused and rebellious against a society that is more than he can understand or feel secure in. The Southern brute respects only force. Non-violence is a very potent weapon when the opponent is civilised, but non-violence is no match or repellent for a sadist. I have great respect for the pacifist, that is, for the pure pacifist. I think a pure pacifist is one who resents violence against nations as well as individuals and is courageous enough to speak out against jingoistic governments (including his own) without an air of self-righteousness and pious moral individuality. I am not a pacifist and I am sure that I may safely say that most of my people are not. Passive resistance is a powerful weapon in gaining concessions from oppressors, but I venture to say that if Mack Parker had had an automatic shotgun at his disposal, he could have served as a great deterrent against lynching.

Rev. Martin Luther King is a great and successful leader of our race. The Montgomery bus boycott was a great victory for American democracy. However, most people have confused the issues facing the race. In Montgomery the issue was a matter of struggle for human dignity. Non-violence is made to order for that type of conflict. While praising the actions of those courageous Negroes who participated in the Montgomery affair, we must not allow the complete aspects of the Negro struggle throughout the South to be taken out of their proper perspective. In a great many localities in the South

Negroes are faced with the necessity of combating savage violence. The struggle is for mere existence. The Negro is in a position of begging for life. There is no lawful deterrent against those who would do him violence. An open declaration of non-violence, or turn-the-other-cheekism is an invitation that the white racist brutes will certainly honour by brutal attack on cringing, submissive Negroes. It is time for the Negro in the South to re-appraise his method of dealing with his ruthless oppressor.

In 1957 the Klan moved into Monroe and Union County. In the beginning we did not notice them much. Their numbers steadily increased to the point where in the local press reported as many as seventy-five hundred racists massed at one rally. They became so brazen that mile-long motorcades started invading the Negro community. These hooded thugs fired pistols from car windows, screamed, and incessantly blew their automobile horns. On one occasion they caught a Negro woman on the street and tried to force her to dance for them at gun point. She escaped into the night, screaming and hysterical. They forced a Negro merchant to close down his business on direct orders from the Klan. Drivers of cars tried to run Negroes down when seen walking on the streets at night. Negro women were struck with missiles thrown from passing vehicles. Lawlessness was rampant. A Negro doctor was framed to jail on a charge of performing an abortion on a white woman. This doctor, who was vice-president of the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People, was placed in a lonely cell in the basement of a jail, although men prisoners are usually confined upstairs. A crowd of white men started congregating around the jail. It is common knowledge that a lynching was averted. We have had the usual threats of the Klan here, but instead of cowering, we organised an armed guard and set up a defence force around the doctor's house. On one occasion, we had to exchange gunfire with the Klan. Each time the Klan came on a raid they were led by police cars. We appealed to the President of the United States to have the Justice Department investigate the police. We appealed to Governor Luther Hodges. All our appeals to constituted law were in vain. Governor Hodges, in an underhanded way, defended the Klan. He publicly made a statement, to the press, that I had exaggerated Klan activity in Union County—despite the fact that they were operating openly and had gone so far as to build a Klan clubhouse and advertise meetings in the local press and on the radio.

A group of non-violent ministers met the city Board of Aldermen and pleaded with them to restrict the Klan from the coloured community. The city fathers advised these cringing, begging Negro ministers that the Klan had constitutional rights to meet and organise in the same way as the N.A.A.C.P. Not having been infected by turn-the-other-cheekism, a group of Negroes who showed a willingness to fight, caused the city officials to deprive the Klan of its constitutional rights after local papers told of dangerous incidents between Klansmen

and armed Negroes. Klan motorcades have been legally banned from the City of Monroe.

The possibility of tragedy's striking both sides of the tracks has caused a mutual desire to have a peaceful co-existence. The fact that any racial brutality may cause white blood to flow as well as Negro is lessening racial tension. The white bigots are sparing Negroes from brutal attack, not because of a new sense of morality, but because Negroes have adopted a policy of meeting violence with violence.

I think there is enough latitude in the struggle for Negro liberation for the acceptance of diverse tactics and philosophies. There is need for pacifists and non-pacifists. I think each freedom fighter must unselfishly contribute what he has to offer. I have been a soldier and a Marine. I have been trained in the way of violence. I have been trained to defend myself. Self-defence to a Marine is a reflex action. People like Rev. Martin Luther King have been trained for the pulpit. I think they would be as out of place in a conflict that demanded real violent action as I would in a pulpit praying for an indifferent God to come down from Heaven and rescue a screaming Mack Parker or Emmett Till from an ungodly howling mob. I believe if we are going to pray, we ought to pass the ammunition while we pray. If we are too pious to kill in our own self-defence, how can we have the heart to ask a Holy God to come down to this violent fray and smite down our enemies?

Three Centuries of Prayer

As a race, we have been praying for three hundred years. The N.A.A.C.P. boasts that it has fought against lynching for fifty years. A fifty-year fight without victory is not impressive to me. An unwritten anti-lynch law was initiated overnight in Monroe. It is strange that so-called Negro leaders have never stopped to think why a simple thing like an anti-lynch law in a supposedly democratic nation is next to impossible to get passed. Surely every citizen in a republic is entitled not to be lynched. To seek an anti-lynch law in the present situation is to seek charity. Individuals and governments are more inclined to do things that promote the general welfare and well-being of the populace. A prejudiced government and a prejudiced people are not going to throw a shield of protection around the very people in the South on whom they vent pent-up hatreds as scapegoats. When white people in the South start needing such a law, we will not even have to wait fifty days to get it.

On May 5, 1959, while president of the Union County branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People, I made a statement to the United Press International after a trial wherein a white man was supposed to have been tried for kicking a Negro maid down a flight of stairs in a local white hotel. In spite of the fact that there was an eyewitness, the defendant failed to show up for his trial, and was completely exonerated. Another case in the same court involved a white man who had come to a pregnant Negro mother's

home and attempted to rape her. In recorder's court the only defence offered for the defendant was that "he's not guilty. He was just drunk and having a little fun." Despite the fact that this pregnant Negro mother was brutally beaten and driven from her home because she refused to submit, and a white woman neighbour testified that the woman had come to her house excited, her clothes torn, her feet bare, and begging her for assistance, the court was unmoved. The defendant's wife was allowed to sit with him throughout the trial, and his attorney asked the jury if they thought this white man would leave "this beautiful white woman, the flower of life for this Negro woman". Some of the jurymen laughed and the defendant went. This great miscarriage of justice left me sick inside, and I said then what I say now. I believe that Negroes must be willing to defend themselves, their women, their children and their homes. They must be willing to die and to kill in repelling their assailants. There is no Fourteenth Amendment, no equal protection under the law. Negroes *must* protect themselves. It is obvious that the federal government will not put an end to lynching; therefore it becomes necessary for us to stop lynching with violence. We must defend ourselves. Even though I made it known that I spoke as an individual American citizen, I was suspended by the N.A.A.C.P. for advocating violence. The N.A.A.C.P. was so fearful of the consequence of this statement that I heard about my suspension over the radio before I got an official notice. The radio announcer tried to give local Negroes the impression that the N.A.A.C.P. advocated tum-the-other-cheek-ism. The thing that struck me most was not the suspension, but the number of letters and telegrams I received from Negroes all over America who showed a readiness to fight. The Negro on the street who suffers most is beginning to break out of the harness of the non-violent race preachers. The fact that the N.A.A.C.P. had to issue a statement saying, "The N.A.A.C.P. has never condoned mob violence but it firmly supports the right of Negroes individually and collectively to defend their person, their homes and their property from attack", is a strong indication of the sentiment among the masses of Negroes. How can an individual defend his person and property from attack without meeting violence with violence? What the N.A.A.C.P. is advocating now is no more than I had advocated in the first place. I could never advocate that Negroes attack white people indiscriminately. Our branch of the N.A.A.C.P. in Union County is an interracial branch.

It is obvious that the Negro leadership is caught in a

terrible dilemma. It is trying to appease both white liberals who want to see Negro liberation given to us in eye-dropper doses; and the Negro masses, who are growing impatient and restive under brutal oppression. There is a new Negro coming into manhood on the American scene and an indifferent government must take cognizance of this fact. The Negro is becoming more militant, and pacifism will never be accepted wholeheartedly by the masses of Negroes so long as violence is rampant in Dixie. Even Negroes like King who profess to be pacifists are not pure pacifists and at times speak proudly of the Negro's role of violence in this violent nation's wars. In a speech at the N.A.A.C.P. convention, he said, "In spite of all of our oppression, we have never turned to a foreign ideology to solve our problems. Communism has never invaded our ranks. And now we are simply saying we want our freedom, we have stood with you in every, crisis. For you, America, our sons died in the trenches of France, in the foxholes of Germany, on the beachheads of Italy and on the islands of Japan. And now, America, we are simply asking you to guarantee our freedom." King may not be willing to partake in expeditions of violence, but he has no compunction about cashing in on the spoils of war. There are too many Negro leaders who are afraid to talk violence against the violent racist, and dare too weak-kneed to protest the warmongering of the atom-crazed politicians of Washington.

Some Negro leaders have cautioned me that if Negroes fight back, the racist will have cause to exterminate the race. How asinine can one get? This government is in no position to allow mass violence to erupt, let alone allow twenty million Negroes to be exterminated. I am not half so worried about being exterminated as I am about my children's growing up under oppression and being mentally twisted out of human proportions.

We live in perilous times in America, and especially in the South. Segregation is an expensive commodity, but liberty and democracy too, have their price. So often the purchase check of democracy must be signed in blood. Someone must be willing to pay the price, despite the scoffs from the Uncle Toms. I am told that patience is commendable and that we must never tire of waiting, yet it is instilled at an early age that men who violently and swiftly rise to oppose tyranny are virtuous examples to emulate. I have been taught by my government to fight, and if I find it necessary I shall do just that. All Negroes must learn to fight back, for nowhere in the annals of history does the record show a people delivered from bondage by patience alone.

Are Pacifists Willing To Be Negroes?

Dave Dellinger

ROBERT F. WILLIAMS makes a strong case for a negative answer to the question many Negroes are asking these days: Can Negroes afford to be non-violent? The Montgomery bus protest, which was once hailed as a portent

of greater victories to come, is fast becoming an icon for pacifist devotions. In Alabama and Mississippi, in North Carolina and Virginia, in Little Rock and Tallahassee, the organized movement for liberation is virtually at a

standstill. In almost any southern town, the individual Negro who dares to assert his dignity as a human being in the concrete relationships of everyday life rather than in the privileged sanctuary of the pulpit is in danger of meeting the fate of Mack Parker or Emmett Till.

In such a situation, it would be arrogant for us to criticise a Robert Williams for arming in defence of himself and his neighbours. Gandhi once said that although non-violence is the best method of resistance to evil, it is better for persons who have not yet attained the capacity for non-violence to resist violently than not to resist at all. Since we have failed to reach the level of effective resistance, we can hardly condemn those who have not embraced non-violence. Non-violence without resistance to evil is like a soul without a body. Perhaps it has some meaning in heaven but not in the world we live in. At this point, we should be more concerned with our own failure as pacifists to help spread the kind of action undertaken at Montgomery than with the failure of persons like Williams who, in many cases, are the only ones who stand between an individual Negro and a marauding Klan.

Disarming One's Opponents

When non-violence works, as it sometimes does against seemingly hopeless odds, it succeeds by disarming its opponents. It does this through intensive application of the insight that our worst enemy is actually a friend in disguise. The non-violent resister identifies so closely with his opponent that he feels his problems as if they were his own, and is therefore unable to hate or hurt him, even in self-defence. This inability to injure an aggressor, even at the risk of one's own life, is based not on a denial of the self in obedience to some external ethical command but on an extension of the self to include one's adversary. "Any man's death diminishes me."

But it is a perversion of non-violence to identify only with the aggressor and not with his victims. The failure of pacifists with respect to the South has been our failure to identify with "a screaming Mack Parker" or with any of the oppressed and intimidated Negroes. Like the liberals, we have made a "token" identification to the point of feeling indignant at lynching and racist oppression, but we have not identified ourselves with the victims to the point where we feel the hurts as if they were our own. It is difficult to say what we would be doing now if Emmett Till had been our own son or if other members of our family were presently living in the south under the daily humiliations suffered by Negroes. But it is a good bet that we would not be in our present state of lethargy. We would not find it so easy to ask them to be patient and longsuffering and non-violent in the face of our own failure to launch a positive non-violent campaign for protection and liberation. The real question today is not, can Negroes afford to be pacifists, but are pacifists willing to be Negroes?

This question is particularly pointed in the South, and those of us who live in the North should not feel over-

confident as to how we would act if we lived there. But the tragic fact is that in the South the bulk of the members of the Society of Friends and of other pacifist groups live down to the rules of segregation much as other people do. Only a few scattered individuals, like Carl and Anne Braden in Louisville, Kentucky, and a few intentional communities, like Koinonia in Americus, Georgia and the Highlander Folk School in Monteagle, Tennessee, break significantly with the pattern of segregation. So long as this pattern is maintained, a temporary absence of overt violence only means the appearance of peace when there is no peace. Human beings must love one another, or they will learn to hate one another. Segregation is incompatible with love. Sooner or later, segregation must erupt into violence, and those white persons who conform to the practice of segregation are as surely responsible as those of either colour who bring out the guns.

Robert Williams makes a bad mistake when he implies that the only alternative to violence is the approach of the "cringing, begging Negro ministers," who appealed to the city for protection and then retired in defeat. The power of the police, as the power of the F.B.I., the courts, and the Federal government, is rooted in violence. The fact that the violence does not always come into bloody play does not alter the fact that the power of the government is not the integrating power of love but the disintegrating power of guns and prisons. Unfortunately, too many of those who hailed the precedent of the Montgomery bus protest have turned away from its example and have been carrying on the fight in the courts or by appeals to legislators and judges.

In Montgomery, it was Rosa Parks, Martin King and their comrades who went to jail, not the segregationists. The power of the action lay partly in the refusal of the participants to accept defeat when the power of the local government was stacked against them, partly in their refusal to co-operate with the evil practice (riding in segregated buses) and partly in the spirit of dignity and love expressed in the words and actions of King.

It would be foolhardy for a white Northerner to present a blueprint for a specific large-scale action which would apply the lessons of Montgomery to other situations in the South. But it is significant that the Montgomery action developed when a single woman, Rosa Parks, found herself psychologically unable to comply with an order to get in the back of a bus.

Those of us who are white will never experience the indignities that are imposed from birth to burial on our coloured brothers. But the least we can do while working for another Montgomery is to refuse to conform to segregation wherever we are. At home and when travelling in the South, we can refuse to eat in segregated restaurants, to stay in segregated hotels, to shop in segregated stores, or to use "White Only" toilets. We can refuse to attend segregated churches or send our children to segregated schools. These simple acts of identification and decency could turn out to be more revolutionary than we dare hope.

Songs Of The People

Bill Holdsworth

"I PREFER muck shifting better than anything", was a comment made by one of the men in Ewan MacColl's radio ballad, *Song of the Road*.

"We built canals, we laid the tracks
of railways here to hell and back,
And now we're going to have a crack
At the London-Yorkshire Highway."

When I made my introduction to socialism it was through the first hand accounts of my father's own childhood in the mills, the waste of war—he was gassed four times before he was scarcely of voting age—the hard times of unemployment and the bitterness of being put off so that other, poorer men brought from Ireland could be put in his place at less wages. Before I even knew what economics or politics was about, I decided to go into the world and fight for a new Jerusalem, one of science, one of machines that would put away for good the hardness of work without meaning. I wanted to get rid of everything that was old, and make a clean sweep. In many ways this clean sweep has been taking place, but in the meantime I have found that my early naïveté made me blind to many things, one of them being the romance of creating, even though it be by using a pick and shovel. In fact it is the men with the pick and shovel, who do not mind shifting a load of muck, who form the main defence against the encroachment of the machine into the art of labour.

I am at one with William Morris when he said, "The thing which I understand by real art is the expression by man of his pleasure in labour." Here we have the roots of our native culture. The many work-songs that have been handed down to us, the basic songs of work in early jazz, are in themselves the firm threads that make up the weave of a people's culture. Ewan MacColl is making a great contribution in the fight against the mass pop-culture, which is in itself a degenerating art. As well as keeping alive the songs of yesterday, the songs of the great strikes before the trade unions were formed, and songs of the people who built up the foundations of Victoria's Golden Rule, he has brought alive the personal drama of our own day and age. When every channel of our senses are flooded with sickly sentiment wrapped up in a commercialised sex packet, it is rare to find any expression of truth and reality getting through. Yet it does. More so during the short lived period of skiffle. (Oh, I do wish those Denmark Street hounds had left the kids alone.)

Although I had got to know of the song *Twenty-One Years* about the great truck roads and the life of the drivers, and the hard hitting song of Charlie Mayo, the Kings' Cross locomotive fireman, called, *The Colour Bar Strike*, from the L.P. record *Second Shift* (Topic 10 T 25) it was not until I heard the *Ballad of John Axon*,

broadcast by the B.B.C. Home Service in April, 1958, that I felt the great excitement and thrill of hearing a rendering of a contemporary event breaking through the thick mud of mass pop culture on the mass media itself.

"John Axon was a railwayman
To steam trains born and bred.
He was an engine driver
At Edgeley loco shed.
He was a man of courage
And served the iron way.
He gave his life upon the track
One February day."

I use Charles Parker's words instead of my own. They are so much more forceful. Whenever I pass through Stockport Station, and read the sign Edgeley Signal Box, I think of that man John Axon, of his life, his love, and his death in the poetry and melody of the Ballad written by Parker and finely sung by Ewan MacColl and Peggy Seeger. *John Axon* was a great ballad, for it dealt with a man in detail. His life and its associations of locomotive movement, the great pantings of a steam engine, and thundering of steel wheels on steel rails, coloured the swing and tone of the songs. The interweaving of the voices of his friends and his wife talking about the man's love for dancing, and the great delight of watching the great mystery of the night sky as he steered his great steam engine through the Cheshire countryside into the early daylight at Crewe, are the very basis upon which a nation's rich culture is built. That only one song from John Axon has yet been recorded, and that the complete ballad is not on record is but a reflection of the poor quality of the people in charge of our cultural establishment—the Records Kings of E.M.I., Decca, and Pye. One of the songs, patterned on the gentle motion of a railway carriage wheels in motion, has become—with new words—a lullaby for my daughter.

In the *Ballad of John Axon* the songs were long, and the technique of interweaving sounds of work, the noise of the pistons, thump, bang, thump, of wheels, the hiss of steam, were controlled in their injection into the main pattern of song and narration. This is not so in *Song of the Road*, I had a feeling that Ewan MacColl and Charles Parker were trying to be too clever in this injection of machine sounds, this time with the voices of men. It was a good idea to try and mix a singer asking a question, "Where do you sleep boy?", and getting the answers in many different spoken dialects; but somehow it did not flow, it did not seem true, although in the following case the answer was highly descriptive and amusing.

Question: (sung) "Where did you sleep boy?"

Answer: (spoken by an Irishman) "On a bed like a Camel's back where me arse got all blistered and carribunkled".

From the write-up in the *Radio Times* I had expected to hear more of the build-up in history of the men who had come and gone in building the canals, then the railways, and now the roads again. For although a mention is made in one verse, much of the greater part of the ballad was tied up in presenting a chronological picture of construction. This is all right in its way, except that a fine chance was missed to show that these men are for many miles of the way following in exactly the same path as the 'navigators'—the navvies—who had gone before. If you travel to Manchester from Euston you will find the Grand Union Canal, the railway that usurped it, and the road that may usurp the railway, all running parallel to each other. If the British film industry want a romantic subject then here it is. The chronicle of the men who built Britain's highways. The canals that helped to enhance a freer flow of trade between our towns; the railway that helped to take our industrial products to the ports and thence across the world. And the essence of the whole great achievement is of the men and women who built both canals and railway, without any mechanical aids. These people who had no trade union to care for their welfare, no welfare state, who were the subject of a Parliamentary Report because they had become a social problem, risked life and limb to carve through the countryside with their families in tow. The story is full of the spirit of romance. And now we have a great road. Unfortunately the road may be more of an economic headache than our public relations boys are letting us think.

Radio ballads

The men who built the canals and the railways were predominantly the wanderers in our society. Poor Paddy who worked on the railway is now found some generations hence working on the road. Some of the best songs of the ballad were about the Irishmen who, because of poverty, have to leave their wives and families to come to Welfare State England to find work and money, and perhaps a home. It was the 'bitty-ness' of presentation that spoilt a rendering of what could become a much better ballad. I suppose 'radio-ballad' would be a truer generic term. Instead of being about the impersonal road itself, the ballad should have been more about people who built it, the majority of whom are often attacked in the Tory Press, the clubs of Tunbridge Wells, and the saloon bars of Berkhamsted, as the bloody lazy working class. Having

worked on a building site I will admit that in comparing the men who work in the open with those in a warm and cosy factory there is a world of difference. You feel freer in the open, and the work seems somehow right and natural.

On the credit side of *Song of the Road*, there was the introduction of jazz. This was exciting and highly expressive. The dynamic application of jazz to the parts concerning machinery accentuated the contrast with the slower, simpler rhythms of the ballad songs. Francis Newton in his book, *The Jazz Scene*, has shown how jazz has given pop songs a vitality not noticeable when delivered as they are on *Top Twenty Pops*. I think jazz can help to develop the audience for the work-song and the ballads of the adventures of our age. I would like to see this audience a participating one. We hardly seem to sing about ourselves anymore. The ballad singers, like Ewan MacColl, A. L. Lloyd, John Hasted, Peggy Seeger, and Nancy Whisky can be counted on one hand. The appreciative public for industrial songs and folk ballads is a small one. Jazz on the other hand, has gradually, since the 1930's in Britain, built up a much greater allegiance from the serious devotees: from strict traditionalists and modernists to the not so discriminating but larger audience of jazz-conditioned pop tunes.

I would like to see more people going out and about to collect material, breathing in the atmosphere of the many new and exciting facets of our modern civilisation, and then writing and singing about what they have found. For unless we do create a spirit of romance, a feeling of humanity about the many harsh and mechanical forms of our life—whether it be the mechanics of science or individual attitudes—we will be in danger of losing our sense of direction. A friend recently asked me why no one had written a poem about New Towns. I doubt if there has been a ballad about one.

Ewan MacColl and Charles Parker are doing a great job of work. So far I have heard on the radio the *Ballad of John Axon*, *Song of the Road*, and *My People and Your People*, which was a dramatic musical about the impact that the West Indian immigrants have had upon the native population of Notting Hill. These, and I hope many others, are the songs that socialists should sing. I have never believed that we should resign ourselves to armchairs and always use long words such as 'alienation' and 'revisionist', but that we should talk and work for happiness. May such ballads become the bed-rock of a socialist-people's culture.

Serjeant Musgrave's Dance

Stuart Hall

Serjeant Musgrave's Dance is JOHN ARDEN's second play to be put on at the Royal Court. It is in every way a development out of, and a distinct advance over *Live Like Pigs*. In the earlier play, Arden made a stubborn plea on behalf of a Gipsy family which refused to be housed, fed, organised, put on the electoral roll, inspected by the Welfare Officers, and generally bugged about in a new housing estate. The play made its case for a kind of rough anarchism at the level of feeling rather than through persuasive argument. The very existence of this family—disturbing the smug middle-class complacency of the estate by fighting and screaming, making love at the open window, pursuing the old vendettas of love and hatred in public—proffered a challenge to the self-satisfied neighbours of the Gipsy family. At the end, the respectable are so outraged that they take sticks and stones, and, supported by the local officials, storm the house. The Gipsies' crude but direct feel for life unleashed the most primitive responses in the neighbourhood: and the play seemed to do roughly the same thing to the audience.

In *Serjeant Musgrave's Dance*, Arden works in the same way, assaulting the audience directly, getting under the skin of their prejudices and complacencies, insisting that they go through and feel his material, refusing them any escape from the play through intellectual rationalising. The play is more tightly built than *Live Like Pigs* though still, perhaps too loose. It denies at every turn straightforward realistic presentation or apprehension. It makes use of metaphor and images and poetry instead, in its comment upon war. And in spite of *Doomsday For Dyson*, *The Offshore Island*, and the "bomb" references in *The Hostage*, *Paul Slickey* and *Look Back in Anger*, this is the first full creative piece on the theme of peace and war which really makes any sense at all.

The play is set in a mining town in the North of England eighty years ago. Four soldiers—Serjeant Musgrave and three privates—arrive as deserters from the army. They have come with a single minded mission—to persuade the townspeople of the terrors and brutalities of a colonial war. And they bear with them, in a Maxim gun case, the skeleton of their comrade, needlessly slaughtered during a punitive raid on a colonial town, to display as final proof. The dead soldier was, in fact, a native of the town, and the lover of Annie, a serving girl in the local pub. The soldiers are dedicated men—held together by the driving mania of their Serjeant, who has a deep religious vision about his Cause, which he pursues and is pursued by, almost to a point of fixed insanity.

The soldiers arrive during the middle of a lock-out at the mines, and the local mine-owner and the parson welcome the appearance of the troops. The Serjeant,

biding his time for a dramatic revelation of his purpose, pretends that he is on a recruiting mission, and the Mayor immediately plans a deal with the troops to take off, in the service of the Queen, a crop of local agitators.

The central development of the play takes place in the Second Act, which is set in the local public house where the troops are quartered. Here the tensions implicit in the soldiers' mission begin to break through. Musgrave insists with his men that the Cause be kept pure. The younger men fall in with the miners, but the watchful Serjeant—appearing to join in the merriment—in fact holds them steady, and breaks up the drinking session before the men are drunk. There is a moment when Musgrave grasps the miners' leader by the arm, telling him that they are brothers, offering him a pint of beer; yet, by his manner, Musgrave chills the proceedings, so that the miners' suspicions that they are being tricked into the army surge forward again. In the third scene, the three privates bed down in the stables; each is approached in turn by the serving girl, Annie, who in her direct way offers to sleep with each of them. High in the background, in the loft of the pub, perched on his pillows and then tossing in disturbed sleep, lies Serjeant Musgrave, warning his men without words that the Cause of peace and the Cause of love are, ultimately, irreconcilable. One of the privates is too old; another is willing, but restrained by the puritanism of Musgrave, whose code he feels, but cannot understand. The third—the youngest of the three—cannot contain his passion and, fighting it all the time, makes love to Annie and resolves to leave his Mission and go away. The second private awakes, discovers him, and in the scuffle, runs him through with a bayonet; Musgrave, high in his room, starts awake, and his piercing scream cuts through play and audience.

In the final act, Musgrave takes the platform at a public meeting, and, watched by the Mayor, the parson and the miners, appeals to their conscience by describing in detail how soldiers are trained, how the rifle is fired, and finally reveals the skeleton. The miners are moved; the Cause is sane and human; perhaps the Serjeant *is* a comrade? Perhaps they they should enlist in *his* Cause? Then Annie enters. "Where is the fourth soldier?" she cries. He is dead—run through with the bayonet of the peace-bringers. The miners turn away; their Cause, they say, is *here*, in the pits, between Capital and Labour. Musgrave's Cause is humanity—but in fighting for it, humanity has been betrayed. Annie weeping on the stage, the miners unmoved, the dead soldier salted away in the outhouse, make their point.

Then Musgrave advances on the audience. His body twists and contorts, as he tries, physically and with raging voice, to drive home the lessons of the brutality

and senselessness of war. Ian Barmen, who plays this driven puritan figure remorselessly throughout, gathers together at this point the terrible agonies of the Serjeant. His dance, like his Cause, draws him tight within, distorts his face and body—his performance pushing the audience back, with a dumb relief, to the weaker, stubborn humanity of Annie, the watchful miners, and the dead private. They—and their unthinking existence *in life*—remain.

The play, of course, has weaknesses. Two, particularly, deserve attention. In the final act, John Arden deserts the pace which suits him best (that developed in the scenes in the public house) and tries to hammer his point home by direct “presentation” (Musgrave’s performance in the public square). Here, *Serjeant Musgrave’s Dance* comes closer to the style of *The Entertainer* (Archie Rice on stage) or *The Hostage*—and the stringent poetry of the Second Act is, consequently, lost. In Osborne and Behan, these devices permit an escape from the confining limits of realistic drama, establish a bridge between play and public entertainment which is a welcome relief. Arden needs none of these dramatic devices, because his style is, from the beginning, unrealistic—founded upon a poetic use of language which is personal and intensive rather than (as in Behan and Osborne) popular and public.

In the second place, Arden has left his plea for a certain kind of anarchist humanism too implicit and unexplained. It is true that Musgrave’s inhumanity has destroyed his Cause; and that the stubborn people who refuse the Cause because it is, ultimately, against life, bear with them the weight of the dramatist’s commitment. Yet at the same time, Musgrave’s case remains to be answered; the soldier’s skeleton, hoisted to the flag-pole from the box, is as powerful a challenge to the

people as the private killed in the squabble in the stables. The miner’s answer—“Our fight is *here*”—is true; but it is not enough. Musgrave’s dance is *our* dance—as surely as the “foreign war” the soldiers have deserted is Cyprus or Kenya or Nyasaland.

Three things remain to be said. The first is that the Court production is one of the finest in recent years. Lindsay Anderson has staged and dictated the pace with a kind of severity which makes no concessions at all to the commercial requirements of the West End stage. Where the play requires pause and silence, they are there; the audience must feel—or fiddle—as they see fit. The opening of the Second Act in the public house is set in brown and blue, against a pale blue winter curtain; it has the strict severity of a Dutch painting, and takes up exactly the moral precision of Musgrave himself.

The second is that this play was killed stone dead by the London critics. It is too dreary even to record in detail the total incomprehension with which they met Arden’s work. They refused it, like a sour fruit-refusing its language, its method, its theme, everything.

The third thing is that this is a play which—if there is life at all in the country and the movement—ought to be saved from its untimely death on the London stage. It ought to be saved and read, played and rehearsed, performed in the rough and ready, by every Left Club, every CND group, and in every provincial theatre which has any respect at all for the art by which it thrives. This is a play which is about us and today. Its themes are those of war and authority, and touch the roots of violence itself. Musgrave is a man in whom the hatred of war has released the most rigid authoritarianism; repelled by violence, he lapses into violence, and rigidity and authority. It is the tragedy of our times and our lives, and no socialist or pacifist can afford to leave it alone.

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Something Rotten in Denmark Street

Brian Groombridge and Paddy Whannel

"Young people have got to believe in something, so they believe in rock 'n' roll."

—Cliff Richard

"They don't call me Parnes-shillings and pence for nothing."

—Larry Parnes to Tommy Steele

IT DOESN'T seem to matter which journal you pick up (including this one)—they are nearly all talking about pop singers. It is not just that magazines hitherto specialising in, say, film stars have broadened their contents to include them. The posh papers are almost as interested as the others. Thus not only do we find Disc Parade in *Picturegoer*, Disc News in *Picture Show* and TV Mirror, Pop Parade in *Photoplay*. *The Observer* recently devoted a full length feature to "Keeping it Groovy with Marty Wilde", and this November's *Vogue* introduces its readers to "The World of Cliff Richard". Whatever the journal (except this one) the breathless, enthusiastic tone is much the same. *Vogue* decorates its not wholly uncritical thesis with a Latin tag, references to Zen and madrigals, but assures us that Cliff Richard is "the most modest show-business personality I have ever met". The *Observer's* staff reporter concluded that Marty Wilde "was very likeable. Despite all the gottas and wannas of the lyrics he remained very English". These phrases would fit without amendment into John Kennedy's book *Tommy Steele*. Kennedy, Steele's manager, writes at length in this vein—"Here is a boy who can command £4,000 for a week's work . . . and yet who still likes nothing better than to go for lunch to an eel and pie shop in Jamaica Road, Bermondsey."

Why should we adopt a more astringent tone? It could be argued that pop music is a recreative form of escape, neither better nor worse than going to a fair to ride on the bumper cars or suck toffee apples—a craze like the hula hoop, but more enduring; subject to commercially contrived changes of fashion, but thereby giving satisfaction to millions of people, just as the dress industry does. Is it true that when you scratch a New Leftist you reveal the old puritan?

It seems to us that this is precisely one of those issues where it is important to avoid both the tyrannical asceticism of the communist states (we read that keeping it groovy with Elvis Presley is an indictable offence in East Germany), and the slap-happy, standardless euphoris of fan publicity, whether in the fan magazines or the minority press. It may well be true that Steele, Wilde and Richard are dear, sweet, unspoilt boys, but there are other matters to judge.

We shall raise just two important questions about pop music, by asserting (1) that most of the music is bad music—judged by its own standards, not by those of art music or folk song; (2) that the promotion of pops

involves a fundamental but typical abuse of the means of communication in contemporary society, with a significance much broader than this one segment of the entertainment industry.

The pop song business has always been a mass produced one. Now it is more so. The chosen names—Power, Wilde, Eager, Fury and so on—match the monotony of words and music. The popular singer who in the past might have emerged as a front-liner after an apprenticeship with the professionally competent commercial dance band, has given place to the working class youth rapidly promoted from the amateur movement of skiffle by the high-powered methods of the "new men" of show business. The professional musicians who make a living by accompanying these stars are required to match the singing with a music, calculated in its debasement and drawing on a corrupted version of Rock (the other source of the new sound)—itself a kind of vulgarised Rhythm and Blues. Noise of an unbelievable ugliness is wrung from saxophones and guitars with sadistic cruelty and finally processed in the laboratory.

Lyrics are given the same treatment and help to create a teenage world sealed off from unpleasant reality. A dream world.

Marty Wilde sings:

"Each night I ask the stars up above
Why must I be a 'teenager in love.'"

The theme continues to be love but, as Colin MacInnes remarks (*Lilliput*, September 1958):

"It is no longer the passion of a particular boy for a particular girl—the emotions of recognizable character in a clearly identifiable context—but the impersonal yearning for nobody-in-particular, for anyone-at-all; a synthetic emotion that reflects the idea of love, and not love itself."

John Kennedy in his book on Tommy Steele writes:

"... when the sky was heavy with trouble—well, there was always Tommy with a grin and a song to take you away from it all."

In actual performance the emphasis is heavily on display on gimmicks and suggestiveness, *The Picturegoer* (November 7, 1959) reports on the act of Billy Fury:

"Fury twists his mouth into a vicious shape and glares into the spotlight. He looks defiant. Slowly, to the throb of guitars, he sings the opening bars. Then, with deliberate calculation, he winds his left leg around the microphone, tilts it back, softly caresses the base with his right hand.

He has developed his technique, for he knows the exact moment to leap back from the microphone. His next move increases the tension among the female element of his audience.

With hunched shoulders and agonized expression, he undoes the zip on his yellow jacket. Down, down it comes, while the screams increase in volume. With one swift movement he casts the jacket aside, grabs hold of the microphone. His previous exhibition seems tame in

Popular Arts

the light of what follows. Over goes the microphone until it lies full length on the stage—with Fury on top of it.” Because of its vast audience and the possibility it offers of artificially whipping up atmosphere by camera angles, lighting and cutting, the T.V. teenage show has a special place in the process.

Roger Watkins writes about “Dig This” in *Picturegoer* (February 7, 1959):

“A choreographer has been hired to perfect the movement routines and the bandleader hopes this will help to make his boys emerge as personalities.” Bob Miller, the bandleader, comments: “Difficulties Yes, we certainly have our difficulties. But the main one is technical. It’s that moving around. It’s not so much playing together without music and remembering the steps—it’s getting the right sound.”

The saxophones are the main problem because they are not loud instruments. So now I’ve fitted microphones to each of them. That’s the only way I can ensure they won’t be drowned.”

The music is so far forgotten that this remark by Francis Essex, the B.B.C. T.V. producer, does not seem out of place.

“If you’re going to have a close-up of a guitarist, sweat pouring off his brow, hair hanging down his face, playing a lengthy chorus as furiously as he can—then you might as well have him playing the right notes.”

Because everything has now to be made entertaining, entertainment must be made more entertaining. Only the purist would doubt that showmanship is a valid part of a popular musicians work. Louis Armstrong has for long exploited his natural ebullience. It is noticeable also that the disdain of the audience cultivated by some modern jazzmen has now become “part of the act”. But, even excepting the large question of talent, the showmanship of an Armstrong or a Gillespie is a long way from that of Billy Fury. There are also some men who simply cannot meet these demands of showmanship, but there is surely something wrong when an outstanding performer, the altoist, Bruce Turner, announces that he is considering either giving up playing or leaving the country.

Other professionals have hit back in print. In an outspoken article in the *Melody Maker* (November 1, 1958) the bandleader, Vic Lewis, attacked those in control of the pop business—the A. and R. men, agents, radio and T.V. producers, disc jockeys, music publishers and sections of the musical press.

“The powerful machinery of commerce keeps an assiduous eye on the youngsters, prepared to exploit them by andering to undeveloped judgment.”

Lewis argues that the B.B.C. should have played a more consciously educational role in popular music. Writing about 6.5 *Special*, he says:

“It is tragic that the high-minded B.B.C. should sink to his kind of thing. Bands are pushed off the air on the excuse that they ‘no longer draw’.”

In the *Melody Maker* (November 14, 1959) however, Brian Matthew, the assistant producer on the B.B.C.’s Saturday Club, writes under the heading “Teenagers don’t want Quality”.

“In a two-hour programme you would think it possible to slip in the odd record *we* think the youngsters should hear. But every time we do, we get violent letters of protest.”

The reasons why people tune in or not to any particular programme are more complex than can be explained by the ratings. There may be good reasons for rejecting the “educational” items on Saturday Club as there are for finding “serious” programmes like the Brains Trust and Sir Kenneth Clark’s *Is Art Necessary* series tedious. Low ratings might call for a new approach, not necessarily the abandonment of the programme. But that apart, while it is understandable that the commercial companies should make the ratings the ultimate test, it is regrettable that a similar policy in regard to pop music is followed by the B.B.C. The Corporation’s activities in this field are almost entirely promotional. It is characteristic that the participants in *Juke Box Jury* are asked to pronounce on a disc’s chances of reaching the *Top Twenty* and not on its actual merits. Such standards are not applied in other fields, such as Jazz and classical music, and it can only be timidity and a confused cultural snobbery which makes the B.B.C. abandon its traditional function in the very sphere in which it would be most useful to encourage discrimination.

To perform this function, however, the B.B.C. could not simply replace its current “anything goes” attitude with its old aristocratic “elevating the masses” outlook. Both positions share, in fact, a too simple view of the place of popular entertainment and of the relationship between performer and audience. It is not that pop music has no standards. Judgments are being made all the time, quality keeps breaking through; the genuine talents of a Crosby or Sinatra survive for years, and it is encouraging that it is Steele and not Billy Fury who has made the grade. But these standards should be nourished and sustained by the media.

The dangerously insulated world sustained by the pop song has its positive side in the healthy rejection of an adult world tarnished by expediency. The response to the surly aggressiveness of Presley contains within itself valuable sources of non-conformism. All through the John Kennedy book there are references to how Tommy Steele is just an ordinary chap who hates the smart sophisticated set.

He is offered champagne:

“Tommy spluttered with laughter, ‘Come off it. Dad’ll have a nice pint of bitter and you can get Mum a Stout. And mine’s an orange juice.’ He winked at me, ‘You’re in Bermondsey now, mate’.”

On the film set he makes friends with everyone:

“He became simply ‘Tommy’, from the tea-women right through to the director.”

That these attitudes are consciously exploited does not make it less significant that this is the sort of image his promoters believe people will respond to. Neither should we underestimate the importance of the instincts behind such a response.

Even so, the pop world overtly sells an invitation to escapism. Again, it is important and difficult to make distinctions. First, the pleasure that is brought to us by a Tony Hancock, a Stanley Matthews or a Mel Tormé is a valuable part of our experience. There is nothing wrong with this kind of entertainment as long as it is not our sole

diet. Provided also we do not make large claims for it. Rock and Roll is a splendid *outlet*; it should not be something to “believe in”.

Secondly, all entertainment is not escapist. Mr. Deeds in the courtroom, Kelly dancing in the rain and Sinatra singing Hoagy Carmichael nourish our ideals, open out our responses and help us to live together. This is not the escapism of *I'm All Right Jack*, “M Squad” or Billy Fury copulating with a microphone, which in turn narrow our sympathies, blunt our sensibilities and trivialise our feelings. Much popular entertainment is of this kind and an imagination fed solely on it is likely to go flabby, to lead to incompetent living. Is there not, for instance, a causal connection between post-marital disappointment and the romantic philosophy of the pop song, or the stories in *Woman or Mirabelle*?

Of all the money spent on records and record players in this country 44.1 per cent comes from the pockets of the economically emancipated teenager. In order to increase or maintain the £15 million a year which that represents, a hard selling publicity machine is essential. The conveyor belt must be kept moving, familiarity with a number must breed fanaticism for it and then contempt, so that another shall takes its place in Top Twenty.

Picturegoer assures us (May 9, 1959):

“The days when peddlers of Tin Pan Alley melodies slipped a surreptitious fiver into the hands of bandleaders to get a number plugged on the air are past. An agreement between the BBC and Britain's music publishers puts a stop to that.

Nowadays, the song man uses the gentle art of persuasion to get his product on radio and TV. And the respectable business methods now in operation have changed the word ‘song-plugger’ in Tin Pan Alley's dictionary. It is no longer a dirty word.”

The new style persuasion is so effective that Larry Parnes can say that over the past couple of years teenagers have “not so much changed as had their tastes changed for them.” The analogy with tastes in dress and car design is not comforting. It is a reminder that song plugging is one of many manipulative devices in an other-directed society. As Mark Abram's survey of teenage consumption reveals, the amount of money available is enormous (£850 million a year net), but the directions in which it is spent are highly specialised. Being a free human being involves knowing what range of choices exist; and having the power to make the choice most appropriate to one's own development and responsibilities. The immature consumer does not stand much of a chance in the face of the wooing to which he is subject.

Moreover, being free is intimately related to having access to reliable information. This is obvious at the political level. Deceptive propaganda from governments to people is making nonsense of the democratic pretensions of the advanced bureaucratic countries (Soviet or capitalist). Choice is made difficult for many, impossible for some, in this humbler arena of pops by ballyhoo. The process is not made innocuous through acquiring an absurd name. Ballyhoo depreciates the language on

which all communication depends, and when the fair-ground barker's hyperboles are diffused over the mass media as systematic dishonesty, it is important to see what is at stake.

This is not always easy. Colin MacInnes' perceptiveness, for example, does not protect him from a blindness in this respect. Reviewing John Kennedy's book in the *Observer*, he was so impressed by Kennedy's feat of lifting Tommy Steele “from total obscurity to star status and income” that he wrote:

“The tricks John Kennedy used (some of them decidedly saucy) are described in detail, and so are his poker-player's financial transactions. It is soon apparent that, in his way, this Personal Manager is a no less remarkable personality than his distinguished young client. For John Kennedy achieved, almost single-handed a revolution in the technique of show-business management in England. Along with the advertising men and the TV boys, he's one of the new kind of streamlined young operators who have erupted here in the 1950s.”

—*Observer* (December 14, 1958)

In this review (though not in *Absolute Beginners*) MacInnes is so enthralled by the ‘streamlined young operators’ that he can call a passage in Kennedy's very ordinarily written book “nerve-tingling”. More important is the failure to see that the “decidly saucy tricks” are admitted untruths, made more serious, not less, by being characteristic of the time. Is it so old fashioned to insist that integrity in the users of mass communications is essential to democracy? In this context it is not a forgivable boyish prank to concoct a pro-Steele interview with the Duke of Kent, to write false captions to photographs, to double salaries in press releases. When Kennedy boasts of these deceptions, what else can we believe in his book? Is it true that Steele is still at heart an unspoilt working class lad, fond of his Mum and his jellied eels, an admirer of Segovia and a reader of George Orwell—or is this merely a saleable image of him?

It is important, though, not to share the streamlined young operators' estimate of the consumers as so many suckers. This is the mistake that Kazan made in “A Face In The Crowd”. In Britain, the machine failed to dislodge Rock in favour of calypso and cha-cha, and now there are signs that consumer resistance to pop promotion as a whole is considerable. A best-selling disc is more likely to have a sale of, say, 100,000 copies, compared with the million and half-million sales of a year or so ago. The young consumer is increasingly aware that he is being got at, and offered a surfeit of mediocrity in return, so the sales are dropping. It is easy to deceive young people, as it is all too easy to deceive any of us. But they can size up the world they are dealing with, because it is not the only world they know. The teenage culture does not only consist of coffee bars and juke boxes.

The check on the commercialised product is a complex of activities and relationships. It must be possible to create a popular music that more adequately represents them.

Book Reviews

Africa Rediscovered

Peter Worsley

Old Africa Rediscovered, Basil Davidson. Gollancz (25/-).

TEN YEARS ago, I was walking along a valley floor in southern Tanganyika when I suddenly became aware that I was continually climbing and descending small ridges as I walked along. When I stopped to take a good look at the surface of the ground, I could see that the valley-bottom was covered with rectangular terraces with channels between them. Later I was to find that this system of agricultural terraces, apparently once irrigated, and far larger than the small mounds hoed up by the Hehe people who now inhabit that region, extended for a great distance and occurred also in other nearby areas. With it were associated cairns of stones, abundant evidence of iron-working, and what looked like the remains of an ancient road. These are but a few of the fragments of similar terracing and vestiges of former roads reported from various parts of East Africa. Whether any connection formerly existed between them is still uncertain. But it is becoming more and more evident that important archaeological finds are not hard to come by in Africa, and that they frequently indicate the existence of very much higher levels of culture in past centuries than were encountered by Europeans who arrived in Africa in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Indigenous oral tradition does not always take one very far, though it often provides crucial hints and certainly, when intelligently handled, reveals much more than many specialists assume. Hehe royal history, for example, peters out into mythological beginnings that place the foundation of their society somewhere back in the seventeenth century. The terraces I noticed were not the remains of a very high civilisation; but this is not all that eastern and southern Africa have to offer in the way of remains of pre-European cultures. No one who has visited the ruins of Great Zimbabwe in Southern Rhodesia, with its impressive 'Citadel' and 'Temple' can fail to respond to the contrast between the majesty of these ruins and the simple life of the Shona herdsmen who graze their animals round about. It is not so long, either, since the West African sculptures and carvings which injected a new flow of inspiration into European art were believed to have been the work of unknown immigrants to Africa.

In other parts of Africa the archaeological record is quite as striking. But the writer who seeks to piece together the story of the history of Africa is not dependent on stones and bones alone. He has, for many areas, abundant Arabic records, many of which, however, are still unpublished. No less than 15,000 Portuguese documents also await publication in the near future. Plainly, the next few decades will see a massive development in African historical studies. The new, emerging African states, moreover, are deeply concerned with studies of

African culture and history. "Négritude" has a powerful intellectual appeal. So it is not surprising that a lot of the most significant and exciting work on the revaluation and synthesis of non-European history has been carried out, not by academic specialists, but by nationalist intellectuals such as Nehru and Panikkar, or by men with internationalist leanings such as Needham, or (for Africa), Hodgkin.

Basil Davidson is firmly in the latter tradition. He would not probably claim to be attempting anything like the enormously erudite work of synthesis that Needham is performing for Chinese science. He specifically emphasises the tentative nature of his findings, in this book aimed at the intelligent general reader. But this is no mere work of journalism, or a popularisation of themes already dealt with by the specialist. It is an original and valuable work, pioneering where nobody else has yet stepped, based on a careful study of existing anthropological, archaeological, historical and other literature, and especially on the Arabic and Portuguese sources. It is the first serious attempt to bring together all the scattered scraps of knowledge we possess to form a coherent account of the cultural history of the continent.

And yet, precisely because one knows that Davidson is an internationalist and a friend of emerging Africa (as his two excellent earlier books, *Report on Southern Africa* and *The African Awakening*, showed), one approaches this present study with a certain wariness. Yes, maybe we have got beyond the stage where every piece of evidence of advanced culture in Africa was attributed to Phoenicians, Arabs, Egyptians and almost anyone other than Africans themselves. We can afford now to dismiss with a shrug the wild diffusionist theories of Elliot Smith and Perry, who traced a world-wide network of cultural achievements back to ancient Egypt. Now, rather, the danger seems to be that we will be overwhelmed with a rash of fantastic theories about enormous bygone African civilisations all over the continent, based on little more than a few pieces of pot and a lot of wishful nationalist thinking. People point to the fact that ancient Ghana was, in fact, situated a long way from the modern state that took its name. One looks suspiciously for that gleam of fanaticism in the writer's eye.

I do not think that Davidson has fallen into this trap. I did begin to wonder, as I read on, whether the ancient civilisation of Meroe in the present-day Sudan was not going to prove the equivalent for him of what lower Egypt signified to Elliott Smith and Perry: the centre from which civilisation spread outwards in all directions. Perhaps Meroe is overplayed, but there is evidence enough of major migratory and cultural movements westwards across the Sudan, and southwards into Bantu-speaking Africa to make one pause before tolerantly



Central Congo: Helmet Mask in wood, probably Baluba

dismissing the notion. And, of course, we still know very little of this "Birmingham of ancient Africa" at the junction of the White and Blue Niles whose extensive remains are still only slightly excavated and whose inscriptions remain undeciphered.

Davidson covers a tremendous field in this book, both in time and space. He constantly emphasises, in the way that Fitzgerald has done for China and Sansom for Japan, the evidence of cultural contact between different parts of a continent without any major natural barriers to internal movement, and also the evidence for contact with the world outside. Frequently, the effect is shattering, as in Mortimer Wheeler's famous remark that "as far as the middle ages are concerned, from the tenth century onwards, the buried history of Tanganyika is written in Chinese porcelain"; or when one reads of the statues of the Emperor Augustus recovered from the capital of Kush, the ancient civilisation of the Sudan which rose out of the decay of Egypt and lasted up to about 300 A.D.; of the possibly Central African pygmy "dancers of God" conveyed to the Pharaoh's courts; of the rock-paintings of ancient boats from the Nile found in the hills of the central Sahara; or of the Christian states which flourished in Nubia from the eighth to the fourteenth centuries. One can read here, too, of the luxurious life of the capitals of ancient Ghana and Mali, empires described at secondhand by men like El Bekri, or, better still, by men like Ibn Batuta, who actually visited Mali after travels in Arabia, China and India, and who yet could find jMali the centre of a literate civilisation worthy of comparison with those Oriental realms. A hundred years after the Emperor Kankan Musa has passed through Cairo en route to Mecca (in 1324) men still spoke of his prodigious camel trains, of the splendour of his retinue and of the vastness of his wealth in gold. The most profitable trade in Timbuktu was said to be the book trade. This was the capital centre of an empire, a seat of university learning, which was to shrink to the proportions of a small and rather wretched town by the nineteenth century, a synonym by then for the savage backwaters of the world as its name had once been the symbol of a proud culture.

West African capitals

Most of these great West African capitals grew to eminence by virtue of their geographical position: they stood on the Niger between the salt-producing areas of the north and the gold-bearing regions of the south. They controlled trade, and attempted to extend their political dominion, often successfully, right into the areas where these products came from. Ghana, Mali, Songhai were the greatest, though smaller, quite important states still existed right up to the time of European colonisation in the nineteenth century, and still leave their stamp very clearly on the new multi-national states now taking shape in western Africa. And how short a time the European occupation has been—little more than fifty years in most parts, and already finished or crumbling fast.

But if the actual occupation of the area, following the 'Scramble for Africa', has been brief, European influence is of much greater duration. True, it was the Almoravids from North Africa who subdued ancient Ghana ten years after the Normans subdued England; and later, it was a Moroccan army, also from North Africa, which conquered Songhai in 1591, in campaigns which did much to diminish the flow of trade between the Mediterranean and West Africa. Much trade did persist along the Saharan caravan-trails, as explorers like Henrich Barth were to find, but to Europeans it had now become much less attractive than the opportunity presented by the plunder of the Indies and America. But with the development of trade in a new commodity, European interest in West Africa was restored. Fourteen hundred and forty-four was the ominous year when the first cargo of slaves arrived in Portugal. "By the early sixteenth century", Davidson remarks, "there were parts of Portugal where the number of negro slaves was said to be greater than the number of native Portuguese". With the opening up of the New World, the demand for plantation-slaves became insatiable: millions were provided, largely from West Africa. Coastal states sprang up which acted as slave-catching centres, raiding far into the interior. The security of life over this whole region was under incessant threat. Africa was devastated precisely while Europe advanced to industrial capitalism.

The great civilisation of Rhodesia, of which Zimbabwe is the best-known remnant, had also crumbled into ruin under European onslaught. In this region, where no fewer than 60 or 70 thousand metal-working sites have been recorded, the famed Empire of Monomotapa had come into being about a thousand years ago and had endured for several centuries. Yet by 1856 Livingstone was to encounter the Monomotapa chief as a now obscure minor potentate. External Portuguese attack and interference in internal struggles had created the opportunity for rivals for the kingship to frustrate the consolidation of a centralised power-system. In consequence, the barons were to win these African "Wars of the Roses"; Portugal was able to march inland from the coast to which she had been so long restricted, and establish control over the mining-areas. But, faced with violence, expropriation and insecurity, the metal-producers gradually stopped working. The complex network of trade decayed, and the Portuguese victory proved an empty one. At one time, the 'captaincy' at Sofala, on the East African coast, had been a lucrative position, far more profitable even than the equivalent post at Ormuz on the Persian Gulf or Malacca in south-east Asia. After the fall of Monomotapa, the region became economically useless. Even the Portuguese themselves relapsed into torpor. The ultimate fate of the region was colonisation by waves of Nguni, moving up northwards under the impact of the Boers advancing from the south—or economic exploitation of a new kind: devastation at the hands of Portuguese and Arab slavers.

The riches of ancient Monomotapa are known to us both from ancient Portuguese reports and from the

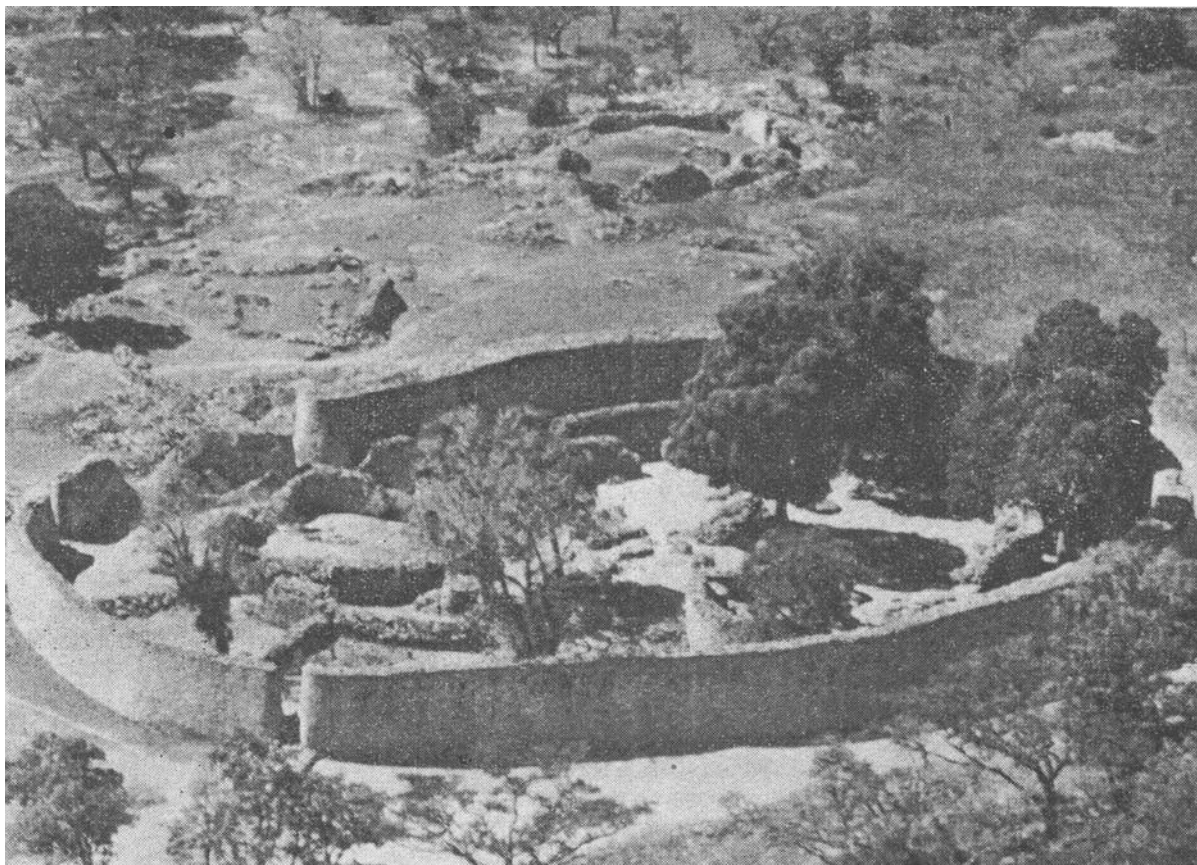
amazing discoveries at Mapungubwe in the Transvaal, probably an outlier of the Monomotapan civilisation. By the early nineteen thirties, Caton-Thompson had demolished all the nonsense about Phoenicians and Hittites, and had firmly established, by careful excavation, that the Great Zimbabwe culture (one of many 'Zimbabwes' in south-eastern Africa) was an indigenous Bantu product. A year or two later, the astounding discovery of a secret and sacred hill, built up, largely artificially, of tens of thousands of tons of soil, was announced. As in the case of the excavations at Kumbi Saleh, the probable capital of ancient Ghana, the explorers were directed to the site by local people who had preserved the tradition that the spot was associated with their forebears. Large quantities of gold objects and many skeletons were found. One sceptre was covered with gold finely worked to under five-thousandths of an inch. But since the publication of the first excavation reports in 1937, very little has been made public. Here alone is one enormous chance of filling in the record: and Mozambique and much of the Rhodesias remain archaeologically unexplored.

This great cultural complex was clearly a major metal-producing civilization, exporting metals to the East via Sofala. One of the strengths of this book is the constant

attempt to relate migrations of peoples and other social developments to the southwards spread of iron-working—though later incursions of pastoral nomads often reduced the iron-workers to inferior status from the proud position they had once occupied. Typically, fearing the prospecting European, the Zulu chief Mzila had the mines closed in the late 1860's and the native miners killed.

Davidson's chapters on East Africa deal with aspects of world history which certainly never reach the school-books. Yet as he shows, there are excellent Arab accounts of the land of 'Zanj'—the East African coastal region which conducted trade with pre-Islamic Arabia and which produced the rich Swahili culture whose poetry still survives, as well as the material remains of large cities such as Mombasa, Malindi, Gedi and Kilwa. Further inland were the Lake kingdoms; the ancient Bigo earthworks; the roads and terraces; and the large stone ruins at Engaruka which housed, probably, some thirty to forty thousand people. Not as rich as Mali or Monomotapa by any means, but significant enough. And on this coast we have the evidence of Greek and Roman contact, and more remarkable still, of Chinese.

For in the fifteenth century, the intrepid admiral Cheng Ho and others began a series of voyages of exploration which took them, amongst other places, to



Great Zimbabwe Site

East Africa. Reproduced here is the famous Chinese painting of the 'auspicious giraffe' presented by the East African city of Malindi to the Chinese Emperor in 1414. By 1500 this astounding burst of exploration had ended, for the mandarins suppressed both exploration and even the ship-building industry itself thereafter in an attempt to buttress their own power. The long history of Indian intercourse with eastern Africa is also touched upon—indeed, it appears that Diaz's rounding of the Cape was stimulated by reports from an Indian navigator that this was possible. Later, the slave trade (here Arab-organised) was to devastate this region too, with Zanzibar as the principal market.

Much of the archaeological evidence has already been lost owing to the depredations of men like the promoters of the Ancient Ruins Company Limited, the modern Southern Rhodesian equivalent of the tomb-robbers of Egypt. But the surface has only been scratched even in Egypt itself. There is work ahead for generations of archaeologists at already-known sites alone.

Davidson seems to have skipped very quickly over some of the historical material which he himself utilised in his other African works; for example, the known history of the central African kingdoms of Kongo, the Lunda-Luba empires, the Portuguese records of Kazembe's kingdom, etc. Perhaps he is avoiding repetition, but the effect is to omit much of the history of the central interior. Nor is there any discussion of those areas where lower forms of social life persisted; and once a high civilisation falls, the region passes out of the story. One has seen recent Soviet works on Africa which have conveyed the impression (by citing Arabic script in West Africa and the East coast; Amharic, etc. in Ethiopia; and a few minor nineteenth century scripts stimulated by European contact) that Africa was covered with numerous literate cultures. Since nothing is said about the absence of systems of writing in other areas, a false impression is—probably deliberately—conveyed. Davidson does nothing like this, however. But if it is true that he is principally concerned to establish that advanced cultures did exist, for the sake of balance and comprehension, we ought perhaps to have had briefly sketched in the background of those less sophisticated cultures against which the State civilisations of Africa represented such an advance. Some more extended and consolidated consideration, too, of the distribution of natural resources and of the relationship of the high cultures to environmental possibilities would have strengthened the book. It is highly relevant, for example (as Davidson himself observes), in considering why no really high culture, comparable with Egypt and Athens, developed in south-Saharan Africa, that there is no equivalent of the enormously fertile river-valleys such as the Nile, the Indus and the Tigris-Euphrates, or the Yellow River bend. And some of the generalisation is of a very hasty and superficial kind: the phrase "tribal feudalism", for example, recurs frequently. One can conceive of possible meanings, all rather debatable, but such vague and undefined phrases fog up, rather than assist, understanding. Finally, it is too easily assumed

that when we find, in areas wide apart, phenomena like 'divine kingship', phallic symbols, agricultural terracing, forts on hilltops, H-shaped metal ingots, that these are likely pointers to contact between the areas. Maybe, but all these are quite capable of evolving independently, and any connection will have to be conclusively demonstrated before it can be accepted.

These observations apart, Davidson's book brings together for the first time, in a reputable and readable way, material which should be known in outline at least to every educated person concerned to equip himself with a working knowledge of the history of mankind. For we can no longer do with a 'world' history focussed on a few European countries. Whatever the undoubted technological—and perhaps as important—organisational superiority of Europe in the last two or three centuries, this has been a recent and brief period and is rapidly drawing to a conclusion. We cannot be satisfied that an intimate knowledge of French or German culture provides an adequate corrective to the notion of the superiority of western Europe, there can surely be no excuse for ignoring the rest of the non-European artistic and scientific heritage. If Dostoevsky, why not the *Dream of the Red Chamber*? If Ronsard, why not, say, Li Po? Is there not, in fact, lying behind this tremendous cultural neglect of Asia and Africa, an unstated assumption of European cultural superiority, the "inarticulate major premise" of Holmes quoted by Davidson? Yes, we are close neighbours of France and Germany, but we are also in a world where Russia, America, China and India are going to be the Four Great Powers. Yet how many departments of Russian Studies have we in England? How many, even, of American Studies? And (in a very small voice) of Indian and Chinese? If we are seriously concerned to educate, and to redress the balance of our educational curricula, why do our schoolchildren—exposed to Notting Hill and Suez—not have material such as Davidson has assembled, presented to them? Or isn't this history? As it is, they will go on believing that Africa is covered in 'jungles', inhabited by 'tribes' just recently descended from the trees. But then, most of our educators themselves believe in something not all that different, though their language is more polite.

The Industrial Game

The Growth of British Industrial Relations, E. H. Phelps Brown, (Macmillan, 42/-).

IT is becoming the practice for many who support capitalism to admit deficiencies in its early forms; more than this, to emphasise those deficiencies. Capitalist society, they say, *was* divided into two hostile groups in the middle of the nineteenth century; the working-class *was* justified in being militant. But now? Now it is different. The bad has been cut out; grievances have been removed; people are contented. Since then, there has been a growth. Unrest in contemporary society is due, they say, not to basic matters, but to superficial aggravating ones. It is an aberration from the model of working partnerships which has been constructed to depict the present; it can be treated in an *ad hoc* fashion if treated at all.

History provides these people with such an abundance of material that they have no difficulty in finding evidence to suit their hypothesis. They can point to improvements: real wages have risen; hours of work have decreased; education is less unequalitarian; the franchise has been extended; and so on.

Not all of them, however, bother to collect evidence—some simply make historical judgments in single sentences such as “You have never had it so good”. The substantiation is left to intellectuals who provide theoretical and analytical economic and political treatises as their stint. These people are not simply conformers or uncritical observers of the social system; they buttress the system up with their theories and analyses. Their function in society is to rationalise the perpetuation of what is.

Some who perform this function would deny any connection with it, and would state that their task was to collect and collate facts and to reason from them, and that in doing this they were uninfluenced by value judgments. But such people are the most potent apologists. Their value judgments are not openly announced; they slip in unobtrusively, influence the argument here and there, sometimes disguised as facts. The claim to be uninfluenced by value judgments is a sham one. It is not possible to play about with social facts, whether they be historical or contemporary, without allowing bias to count for something. One cannot even select facts without bias. This being so, the bias should be honestly stated by the author, for there is no other device for excluding it. Objectivity in the social sciences is an illusion.

This illusion is revealed clearly by Professor E. H. Phelps Brown in his book *The Growth of British Industrial Relations*. Here is a book which oozes with value judgments that are never explicitly stated. It is the latest large-scale intellectual attempt to buttress existing employer/worker relations in Britain. It is well-written; reads easily and convincingly; and it needs to be taken seriously.

Professor Phelps Brown has selected the period 1906 to 1914, which was marked by bitter industrial strife, for special study. His book, however, is intended as “something more in purpose than an account of one period alone. . . . It does not only depict the state of affairs in 1906–14, but looks backward from it to see how it had been reached through the years before, and forward, to ask how far it accounts for what goes on today.” (p.xxxvii). The method sounds plausible. History, however, is a continuous process, and what happens at any one time is a consequence of the conflicts in that process. Sense can only be made of the process if the period of time examined is sufficiently long to show its continuity and the correlation between phases.

In any case, the period 1906–14 forms an incomplete phase. The year 1906 can be said to mark the beginning of a less unequal relationship between employers and workers than had existed before. But 1914 marks nothing other than the beginning of a temporary interruption. The militancy which was displayed in the years before 1914 had returned by 1917

and by 1919 it was as if no interruption had occurred. In some respects the tension between the classes was more intense than during the pre-war years. Not until after the General Strike in 1926 was the situation so appreciably changed that another phase could be seen to be operating.

The period 1906–14 then is not instructive; nor for that matter is the period 1906–26. The longer period is a stage in the class struggle and to understand what happened then one has to examine what preceded it. The class struggle is not evolutionary; given a certain social relationship, it exists and it will continue to exist in different forms and degrees of intensity until that relationship is changed and a new one is instituted in its place.

Professor Phelps Brown, however, does not believe in the class conflict. Indeed throughout his book he mentioned the word conflict only in connection with other people's ideas—never to describe a relationship. He prefers to talk of a partnership between workers and employers. Thus on page 101 he writes:

“What wage-earners generally resent is not having to work under another man's direction but working for his purpose and his profit. The end for which they have to work is his and he has chosen it without consulting them. They are taken on solely to serve it, and will be laid off as soon as they cease to . . .

But is not this only a peevish illusion? Is not the relation essentially reciprocal, a partnership between two men neither of whom can get on without the other? What jobs would the wage-earners have now if the business had not been built up? And so long as they want to stay in those jobs, what prospects of betterment have they save as the business thrives? Each party can prosper only as the other does. That is profoundly true, and yet the condition of the wage-earner's working life can easily persuade him of the opposite. He can seriously believe that he can prosper only in so far as he can keep the bosses on the run.”

There are signs here that the partnership is not altogether harmonious; that it is not natural or equal. Indeed, one of Phelps Brown's problems is “to explain why those who can prosper only as partners have so often been at daggers drawn. . . .” (113). He lays much emphasis on the qualities of the participants. Employers have their faults but by and large they are where they are because they possess fine, unique qualities. Why, he asks, are there more workers than employers? (351). Because “... initiative, drive and the power to organise and direct are rare gifts. . . .” He adds: “If more men had the gifts of enterprise and thrift the arrangement might be different. . . .” But employers do not simply possess these qualities; they are altogether better men. Read this:

“Technical training apart, the employer was increasingly likely to have had more general education than the wage-earner. There would still be incapable men among the employers, and men of high innate ability among the employed; but the growth in the size of the firm made it more likely everywhere that the posts of direction and management would be filled by men with more education and brains than their workpeople.” (108).

How does all this handicap the partnership? Well:

“It is hard not to be jealous, and suspicious, of those who are visibly abler than oneself. In one way, equality was the conscience of the age in Church and state—the equality of all men before God, before the law, and in ‘the verdict of democracy’; but how could there be equality in the dealings between bright men and dull men? The clear mind confronted with the stupidity that cannot even recognise its own interests can hardly express goodwill except by a self-imposed fairness and artificial patience that are felt, and resented, as condescension. The slow mind

confronted with the quick one expects to be outsmarted, searches simple statements for hidden meanings, fears that to agree will reveal its own helplessness, and keeps its end up by being difficult." (108-9).

When Phelps Brown asks why labour has not tried to make participation in control a condition of employment he answers because they "did not feel they could do it" (215). Shades here of Selig Perlman, who in 1928 wrote that the "typical manualist is aware of his lack of native capacity for availing himself of economic opportunities. . . ." (*A Theory of the Labour Movement* by Selig Perlman, p.239). But enough of this. So far, we know more about the author than his book. Professor Phelps Brown is entitled to his opinions; all we ask of him as a social scientist is that he should recognise that he has them. Unfortunately he has not done this. An unbalanced book is the consequence.

Industrial relations, no matter how they are regarded, have two sides. And it is unlikely that, even if one side were consistently in the wrong, the relations should be explained by research into one side only. Yet this is precisely what Professor Phelps Brown has done. He makes reference to employers, of course, but he has made no examination of their attitudes and behaviour. Occasionally we are treated to a criticism of employers by implication, but by and large the author is firmly on their side. All in all, there is nothing about employers we did not know before, and less than we do know. The book has 414 pages.

See no conflict; hear no conflict. So there is no conflict. The craftsmen who formed the first unions steered clear of politics, Phelps Brown tells us, because "the craftsman in Britain had his status in the community, wore his top hat, stood apart from the mob. . . ." (117). Agricultural workers, who more than most lived in an environment dominated by a minority, failed to organise in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, we are told, partly because they were backward and partly because of the opposition of the farmers, squires and parsons—though "there were as many humane men among them as elsewhere"—but "the happier side of the villager's life will also have had its influence. . . . His own work, of its nature, brought him independence: he set about it in his own way, often alone by himself in the field. . . . He met his employer face to face, and sometimes worked beside him. . . ." (175-6). An idyllic picture is painted of a worker's life under a small employer who takes his jacket off and sometimes works at the bench.

The examples of the distortion of social facts are too numerous to list here. Some are more easily forgiven than others. But it is not easy to forgive the lack of balance in the description of the period which is central to the book. Trade unions, between 1906-14, for the first time in their history, waged national strikes on national issues. Their acts were felt throughout the economy, and both employers and the government were quick to react. The situation was made more intense by the propaganda of the Syndicalists who advocated the overthrow of the State by the use of the general strike. The influence of the revolutionary trade unionists is difficult to gauge, but it was important. It was felt first on the docks, in the mines and on the railways. By 1914 it had spread to the building industry and from 1915 was spreading through the engineering industry. The Syndicalists are only mentioned in a short paragraph about the Cambrian miners' strike in 1910. What they did elsewhere is ignored by Professor Phelps Brown.

The strikes were bitter by any standard; in Liverpool in the summer of 1911 there was almost a state of siege with the workers dominant. The Government was not passive. According to Phelps Brown its role was a conciliatory one, but in fact, conciliation was a lesser function for the Government than the protection of private property and, *ipso facto*, the interests of employers. There was a large scale displacement of troops and their appearance, no matter for what reason, was provocative. Almost all of the home-based troops were used. The Parliamentary regulation which restricted the employment of

troops in industrial disputes was abrogated. The class allegiance of the Government was indelibly shown. But, apart from recognising the relationship between the use of blacklegs and outbreaks of violence (335)—which the late G. D. H. Cole had long ago described—Professor Phelps Brown ignores the use of troops.

What does the book add up to? It does not tell us anything fundamental about the present. The main determinant of industrial behaviour is given as a material one. Provide the workers with higher real wages and they will be satisfied. They are now largely satisfied, we are told, due, not to trade union action, but to increased productivity. They would be better satisfied if negotiations with firms superseded industry-wide negotiation. Aberrations from the norm, that is disputes, can be prevented by *ad hoc* treatment within firms. In the words of Professor Phelps Brown's last sentence: "It is only through the understandings developed there that 'the two sides' can approach a working partnership." This is mere surface scratching. The total adds up to bad history, and, in consequence, largely worthless analysis.

V. L. ALLEN

Sociological Tradition

Consciousness and Society, by H. Stuart Hughes, published by MacGibbon and Kee, 1959 pp 433, 30/-.

NINETEENTH CENTURY social thought in Great Britain rested upon two complementary sets of philosophic assumptions: those of positivism and utilitarianism, and, though the twentieth century has seen both sets of assumptions challenged in nearly every field of investigation, the need for a radical reorientation of sociological enquiry has hardly been recognised in this country. Thus Professor Hughes new book *Consciousness and Society*, which surveys the work of Europe's leading sociologists and social philosophers in the period 1890-1930, and introduces their ideas to a non-specialist British public for the first time, could have quite revolutionary significance.

The assumptions of positivist-utilitarian sociology may be summarised as follows: (1) All empirical facts, including social facts can and should be observed without preconceptions. In Durkheim's early crude terminology, they should be studied "as things"; (2) Insofar as human behaviour is recognised as being purposive rather than causally determined, the observed actor is to be thought of as a rational scientifically-minded individual, formulating his ends and choosing the scientifically appropriate means of achieving them; (3) A sociology (i.e. an account of how individual actions can be knit together to form a stable social system) can be built on this foundation only by assuming that what ends men seek are irrelevant to the problem of social order. Here lurks the hypothesis of the unseen hand.

The naive political optimism which such sociology inspired was beginning to break down before the end of the nineteenth century, and in one field after another philosophers, psychologists, political thinkers and sociologists were compelled by the facts and problems which they faced to go back on their tracks and to begin the construction of a new model of human nature and social order. This was true of Bergson and Groce in philosophy, of Freud in psychology, of Sorel, Pareto, Mosca and Michels in political sociology, of Rickert and Dilthey in historiography and of Durkheim and Max Weber in sociological theory.

The positivist assumption about the objective nature of social science was challenged by Bergson's emphasis on intuition, by Dilthey's distinction between the method of "verstehen" and that of natural science, by Sorel's notion of "diremptions" and by Weber's clearer formulation of a similar idea in his notion of the ideal type. Each of these writers was forced, either to deny that social facts could be studied in scientific terms, or to devise scientific concepts

which they recognised as “fictions”, having an interpretive, rather than a descriptive function, and as being chosen with reference to the investigator’s own value premises.

Belief in the rationality of human conduct was, of course, shattered by the clinical findings of Freud. But quite apart from Freud the political sociologists were being more and more compelled to devise ideal types of non-rational action in their attempt to account adequately for the political facts of life of the twentieth century. Thus Pareto put economics aside to study the “residues” which were left when the behaviour of rational man had been abstracted out of his model of society. Sorel turned to the study of the myth as a motive force in political action. Durkheim plunged into a systematic analysis of the non-contractual elements underlying Spencer’s “industrial” society. And Weber, personally involved in the creation of the German democratic republic after the First World War, demonstrated the historical precariousness of the “rational-legal” type of social co-ordination, and looked backwards and forwards to the emergence of “charismatic” leaders (i.e. leaders ruling by personal authority).

Thus the problem of the role of shared values in social systems was pushed to the centre of sociology. But the bourgeois values concealed behind Bentham’s comment that “pushpin is as good as poetry” no longer reigned unchallenged in the twentieth century. Weber showed that economic rationality itself was the product of a particular world outlook derived from Calvinism and built into middle class ideologies. And in a class-divided society, men with conflicting economic interests, making conflicting valuations, sought to bend social institutions to serve opposite social purposes. The “necessity” of any social institution was shown to be relative to the interests of a class. So what had passed for objective sociological descriptions were shown, above all by Karl Mannheim, to be nothing more than “ideologies” and “utopias”.

Socialism Is a Cry of Pain

From the standpoint of Marxism, with its origins in the Hegelian rather than in the utilitarian positivist tradition, this breakdown of bourgeois sociology had always seemed inevitable. Thus it was to be expected that some Marxist reviewers should have greeted Professor Hughes’ book with a smug comment of “I told you so”. But Marxism has some utilitarian roots too, and it is no accident that along with the bourgeois revisionism of Weber and Pareto, Professor Hughes finds it necessary to devote a central place in his book to the revision of Marx. It is not merely that, as Eduard Bernstein scribbled in his notebook, “peasants do not sink, middle class does not disappear, crises do not grow larger, misery and serfdom do not increase”; the much more fundamental point is that the values and meanings which men attach to their experience are as important as material interests in the formation of classes and in the construction of a socialist society. Thus the critique and development of Marxism carried through by a writer like Gramsci is as important for Marxism as the work of, say, Pareto, Durkheim or Weber is for bourgeois sociology. Both Marxism and bourgeois sociology have been compelled to recognise more clearly that societies are not mere mechanical constructions, but the work of human beings striving for the realisation of human values. Perhaps the moral of Professor Hughes’ book for socialists is best contained in the comment which he quotes from Durkheim that, “Socialism is not a science, a sociology in miniature: it is a cry of pain”.

Professor Hughes has been able to raise the central issues so clearly, only at the cost of sacrificing a detailed consideration of the thought of his authors. Thus those who have a detailed acquaintance with and admiration for the work of Groce or Freud or Weber may well feel that scant justice is done to the subtlety and complexity of the thought of these authors. Yet the connections between them are important too, and the great merit of the book is that writers who may appear from

their work to be dealing with purely abstract problems were men of political flesh and blood actively engaged in the tremendous political conflicts of their time. British sociology which faces the post-Suez post Hungary decade with the slender theoretical resources provided by the Webbs, or Booth and Rowntree could learn much from them.

JOHN REX

Lolita

Lolita by V. Nabokov. Weidenfeld and Nicholson.

THE ELEGANT and sophisticated teasing so characteristic of 'Lolita' is nowhere, perhaps, more conspicuous than in the "Foreword", purporting to have been written by one John Ray Jr., Ph.D. After judiciously discussing the book's alleged history, "Mr. Ray" permits himself to assay its quality, concluding "But how magically (the author's) singing violin can conjure up a tendresse, a compassion for Lolita that makes us entranced with the book while abhorring its author!" Since the convention that discriminates between the fictitious Mr. Ray and the fictitious author of the main narrative is clearly not intended to be taken very seriously, we cannot help feeling that Mr. Vladimir Nabokov, the real author of the entire work, is teasing us.

The main narrative begins "Lolita, light of my life, fire of my loins. My sin, my soul. Lo-lee-ta: the tip of the tongue taking a trip of three steps"—and a few paragraphs later the narrator, still in euphuistic vein, proposes to go on gambolling for a while "within the hollows and dells of memory . . . if you can still stand my style". Our rueful smile, at this point, is involuntary for we were, of course, just beginning to wonder. Mr. Nabokov is still teasing us. He has also begun to tease, or at least to toy with, language, and perhaps, swerving confidently from the outset to the most hazardous perspective of irony, to tease himself.

To tease successfully one must understand: and before we have read many pages we are compelled to acknowledge Mr. Nabokov's right to tease *us*. He understands us—our continual battle with hypocrisy, our permanent difficulty in accepting anything not previously authorised by either convention or the pronouncement of genius, our ultimate inevitable capitulation to literary truth.

Few authors have been capable of establishing and maintaining such an intimate, if slightly mocking, hold on their readers. "Reader!" Mr. Nabokov cries, and immediately anticipates our response to the absurd appeal by adding "Bruder!" At any moment he may glance up from his writing to visualise us "a blond-bearded scholar with rosy lips sucking la pomme de sa canne", with such casual intensity that we mislay for a moment our conviction that we are really dark, stickless and clean-shaven.

What a potent feeling of authenticity is gradually generated by this book, which never seriously attempts to establish a single, conventionalised relationship with reality, which, indeed, seems almost to mock its own claim to be taken seriously! The machinery of *Lolita* is sometimes preposterous and never (to appropriate the adjective used for the adolescent heroine's underclothes) more than perfunctory. It is as if the narrative conventions of the European novel having finally broken down, analysed out of existence, perhaps, by Joyce, Nabokov has cheerfully started again from scratch. Or rather, since it is late in the day to begin at the beginning, has impartially adopted any convention that suits his immediate purpose, protecting his readers, all the while, by a veil of irony, from the demands of any of them. And yet, although the degree of stylisation and the favoured convention may vary from page to page, almost from sentence to sentence, we find the authentic quality of 20th century life emerging.

Steadily, as we read on, the doors of *Lolita* swing open to

reveal more and more of our culture. We follow an elaborate and melodious pun until it has led us unexpectedly to a new and valuable perspective on academic or social life. An audacious and complex image, gathering up strands of contemporary significance, flowers ultimately into a whole bouquet of psychological insight. Physical objects proceed down avenues of enchantment and may, no matter how slight in themselves (few authors have had Nabokov's eye for telling minutiae), burst suddenly into lurid, but often exact, symbolism. Almost anything—the name of a hotel, a pill, a literary reference, a fragment of popular music, or an article of clothing—may develop into a distinct theme, acquiring ever richer deposits of meaning as it proceeds through the book.

There is a short, idiosyncratic and almost panegyric study by Nabokov of Gogol, whose name and influence are certainly worth recalling in view of Nabokov's own imaginative response and creative method. For insight into the verbal vivacity and proliferating imagery of *Lolita*, however, we should, perhaps, apply to English sources and particularly to Shakespeare and the Elizabethan drama. There are few other parallels for the way in which Nabokov's puns, images and tropes constitute an organic part of the total meaning and form of his book; and an indication of *Lolita's* stature is given by the fact that any serious consideration of it must ultimately concern itself largely with use of language and quality of imagination.

Lolita purports to be the reminiscences of one Humbert Humbert, a European scholar and intellectual long resident in America and afflicted with a strong and inevitably unhappy preference for immature girls. He himself refers to this preference as a 'perversion' and throughout the book oscillates between a rhetorical, and not very convincing, identification of his own with the conventional attitude of uncompromising hostility towards his condition and an engaging and humble defence of it as relatively inoffensive. Many reviewers have aligned themselves with the former attitude and it is strange, 40 years after Freud first acquainted us with the relativity of the concept of sexual 'normality', to find the term 'monster' appearing in reviews of *Lolita*.

In an American home, in a small American town, Humbert encounters Mrs. Haze and her daughter Dolores, also known as Lolita. The child immediately becomes the focus of his existence and Humbert marries the mother solely to ensure proximity with the daughter. After an opportune road accident has disposed of the elder Haze, Humbert physically consummates his relationship with Lolita and embarks with her on a course of always lyrical and sometimes fabulous travels over the motor roads of the United States. The pathetic couple finally settle in a small, Eastern academic town where Lolita resumes her education. Before many years have passed, Humbert loses Lolita, whose attitude to him, scarcely modified by the various drastic alterations in their relationship, is one of indifference lit occasionally by a flash of anger or, less frequently, a weak glow of affection, to a decadent playwright. After several more years, he locates her once more, learns from her the name of his successor (who soon abandoned her), hunts him down and (in perhaps the most macabre, comic and surrealist piece of melodrama in contemporary fiction) shoots the man to death. The 'Foreword' tells us that he dies in prison while awaiting sentence.

As we pursue the hilarious and fetching confession of Humbert Humbert the difficulty of applying to *Lolita* the conventional criteria of the novel becomes clear. We have only, for example, to compare the subtle and distinct characters of say Tolstoy or Stendhal with the standardised pattern of broad and casual strokes of which Nabokov's heroine consists in order to understand that the difference is no mere superficial one of technique but extends, possibly, to ways in which the human world itself has changed in the last century. For if we try to examine Lolita herself we find that it is difficult to detach her from her background. She is a perfectly credible young American girl but she does not exist, cannot exist, as a separate and unique whole, as Natasha, Anna Karenina or

Mme. de Renal could. If we seek an understanding of her inner nature, we find ourselves contemplating outer things, such as descriptions of schools, of camps, of humming roads, of educational theories and American mores; and if we isolate the few paragraphs that deal exclusively with the conduct, appearance or speech of the heroine, we find that these are far too superficial to sustain the weight of the Lolita we feel, by the end of the book, that we have come to know. The feeling grows on us that the comic-books, the hotels, the highways, the schools are not only not entirely dissociable from Lolita, but that, in an important sense, they *are* Lolita. Character has been externalised.

From this position, it is but a step to charging the protagonists with symbolic meaning and discovering in Lolita an archetype of her civilisation and in Humbert, the cultured rentier, who can train the individual forms of irony and national psychology of several European cultures on the least appropriate American situation, a symbol of Decadent Bourgeois Europe. Our interpretation of the book thus moves irresistibly towards allegory. For the fact, however, that it is not deliberate allegory, in which specific values have been intentionally assigned to symbolic characters, we have the authority of the author. If we cannot rid ourselves entirely of some such interpretation, the reason may be that allegory is inherent in any *naturalistic* (as much of 'Lolita' is) treatment of our mass age, and that the novel of the individual the classical novel, is no longer adapted to what our society is actually like.

If *Lolita* has orthodox failings, inconsistency of character, of emotional attitude or of narrative technique, these are perhaps an inevitable consequence of Nabokov's contempt for orthodoxy. Its virtues, conversely, are of an unorthodox kind and the critic thus finds that a more exact vocabulary of blame than of praise is available to him. It would be easy to dwell on the difficulty of amalgamating the elements of Humbert's character into a credible whole, to contest the psychological validity of some of the relationships and to analyse destructively the various shifts of convention that occur throughout the book. It is also legitimate to point out that there is a flavour of real decadence about *Lolita*, which may be associated with the choice of theme but is not attributable to it. For we can discern in this book the decay of a great tradition which, starting with Gogol and acquiring its maximum suppleness and confidence with Dostoevsky, is here breaking down in a welter of puns, images and elaborate tissues of irony interspersed with passages recalling the earlier triumphs.

It is less easy to estimate the quality of Nabokov's undoubted achievement. It is clear, to begin with, that if strength of imagination, a bold and subtle command of language, a unique range of humour and a wide, if perhaps not profound, knowledge of human beings, are important to literature, then so is *Lolita*. Further than this, we can point to the almost unprecedented feat, in contemporary letters, of a long work of narrative art, rich in literary allusions but never 'literary', in which the scale of our world—our contemporary world—of fleeting encounters, sadness, change, unthinkable futures and machines has been effortlessly realised. If *Lolita* is more obviously 'decadent' than the great bulk of contemporary fiction, it is only because it is vastly more alive, and is not based, as much of the rest is, on assumptions of significance and formal orthodoxies which are being increasingly eroded, if indeed they retain any validity at all, by the tendency of the world. Nabokov has found an approach to the terrible problem of defining our increasingly incredible lives.

PAUL ABLEMAN

Philosophy Again?

Words and Things, Ernest Gellner. Gollancz (25/-).

Thought and Action, Stuart Hampshire. Chatto & Windus (25/-).

THERE IS a gulf today, which we must make every possible effort to narrow, between the kind of thinking characteristic

of practical moral and political dispute on the one hand, and what in contemporary academic circles is regarded as philosophy on the other. Although current philosophy in this country has been drawn increasingly towards logic and away from moral and political theory, it can be shown (cf. Iris Murdoch in *Conviction*) that this choice is in fact a moral one (albeit disguised) and is in no sense logically forced upon us. All that the 'anti-metaphysical' arguments oblige us to acknowledge is that moral theorising is not the discovery of bogus 'facts'; there is no reason to reject moral and political theory as such, unless it be a basically Liberal prejudice to the effect that such theory is unnecessary or dangerous. It is vital that the 'neutrality' myth about contemporary philosophy should be exploded, for only in this way can the hidden prejudices be brought into open dispute and philosophy be reunited with explicitly political thinking.

But socialists must use philosophy, not merely abuse it. It is for this reason that Mr. Gellner's gloriously iconoclastic attack on the current methods of 'linguistic philosophy', *Words and Things* is useful only destructively. His frontal assault is refreshingly impolite and extremely funny, and his sociological insights into the movement are often penetrating: we should take more seriously than we have done the problem of why philosophy has gone the way it has—of the relation between the particular expertise of linguistic philosophy, with its attendant mystique, and the general professionalisation of our increasingly managerial society. But Gellner's insights are only insights; they fit into no coherent positive philosophy, for he has no coherent positive philosophy to offer.

The other recent book to make inroads into contemporary philosophy is Stuart Hampshire's *Thought and Action*, but it does so by quite different methods and is ultimately of more use, I believe, because it is not entirely negative. Gellner is concerned to prove that philosophy is possible and that linguistic philosophers are merely doing it under the guise of 'analysis'; Hampshire proves the possibility of philosophy by actually doing some. Where Gellner devotes his whole book to 'linguistic analysis', Hampshire gives it seven pages. But both books may help in getting British philosophy out of its present unconstructive state, and in so far as this state is a matter for sociological as well as philosophical concern—in fact the two are inseparable—Gellner's vitriolic injections may be a fairly direct way of making philosophy a rather less gentlemanly pursuit: the recent controversy in *The Times* is extremely revealing in this connexion.

Let us consider the argument more closely. Traditional philosophy, to paraphrase Mr. Gellner, took language for granted and puzzled about the world, while linguistic philosophy appears to take the world for granted and puzzles about language: a philosophical solution these days often seems to consist in a prolonged worrying about the terms in which the problem is posed—prolonged to the (quite hypothetical) point at which the worry vanishes. The difficulty is to size up this revolution and get it in perspective.

The key insight of the new movement is perhaps the elimination of meanings as some sort of special entity lurking behind our words, and the recognition that language is essentially an institution where words have their meaning by virtue of their function in the whole structure rather than through any simple correspondence or non-correspondence with basic objects of reference somehow already there, pre-linguistically, in the world. Our concepts, that is, settle the form of the experience we have of the world, and description of reality must be an inexhaustible process. There are, so to speak, no 'brute facts' in the world: a grocer's bill is only a grocer's bill because of the human institutions of 'buying', 'selling', 'owing' and so on; it is wrong to say that it is 'really' only a piece of paper, an aggregation of molecules or any of a variety of other philosophically favoured entities. So with everything. A table may also be a high altar in a society where certain religious terminologies are applied.

The value of this insight is to put an end to certain of the more absurd philosophical theories that arose from the assump-

tion, tacit or otherwise, that every word used in language named some object in the world (or somewhere). Its dangers are that it may lead to the idea that systematic philosophy is no longer possible: the problems of philosophy begin to look like mere shadows cast by the confusions of our language; philosophy seems to be condemned either to non-existence or to the mere study of antecedent lexicographical facts: the most we can do, it appears, is painstakingly exhibit the way the confused terms actually function, until such time as the paradox is dissolved, the cramp relieved.

It is at this kind of prospect that Mr. Gellner, rightly it seems to me, rebels. The trouble is that his rebellion goes altogether too far and his few positive philosophical remarks suggest nothing more progressive than a return to the ideal-language quest associated with Russell. This is a kind of avatism we cannot accept: we cannot simply ignore the work of Wittgenstein and the rest, and the baby-bathwater relationship in fact needs to be examined with very great care.

It may be said that a proper understanding of language can enable us to dispose of philosophical theories and disputes. However, this can mean two quite different things, only one of which is meretricious nonsense of the kind that Gellner attacks. We may, that is (or so it is alleged), as a result of studying *usage*, doing 'analysis', cease to be troubled by some philosophical paradox or other; but this in itself may show nothing whatever about the rightness or wrongness of the philosophical theory with which we were (as they say) obsessed, any more than a course of psycho-analysis proves that the way the neurotic comes to see the world at the end is the right way. (Consider the relation between psychoanalysis and 'brain-washing'.) If, on the other hand, we study the *nature of language* as an institution linking us together in a common world (rather than mere usage, locally, *within* language) we may in *this* way be forced to abandon certain philosophical theories that previously seemed to make sense. This second activity is genuine philosophy: we have shown the theory to be false, instead of easing it gently away; it is proof, not therapy. To take a case: the fact that I need the intersubjective medium of language if I am to identify and discuss my own sensations and feelings shows that the so-called sense-datum theory of the phenomenologists must be wrong: according to this theory my own sensations and feelings are all that I can know about for certain, and all my other, objective, knowledge is secondary, derivative and doubtful. In fact, as we can see when we understand how language works, quite the reverse is true. This is a philosophical move. On the other hand, merely to argue (or claim) that there is no support for the sense-datum theory in ordinary usage is no refutation or proof of anything.

Gellner's attack is directed at arguments (which are in fact used) of this obviously absurd kind, but he offers us nothing in their place. The linguistic mistake has been to suppose that therapy is enough, and that there is no longer need (or even, somehow, room) for an explicit and viable characterisation of the traditionally mischaracterised phenomena. The value of Hampshire's book, as of Mr. Strawson's *Individuals* which immediately preceded it, is that this requirement is not only recognised, but an attempt also made to meet it.

Hampshire shows that the possession of language is essential to humanity and that it is not some kind of detachable advantage that men happen to have over animals; without language there could be no thought, knowledge or belief—nothing more than the level of consciousness that we are in fact prepared to ascribe to animals. And yet it is on the pre-linguistic activity of pointing, gesturing at objects in the world around us as a primitive expression of our needs and requirements, that the institutions of language are superposed. Primarily we conceptualise the world in terms of our human needs and requirements. To see this is to put language in its place in relation to the most basic necessity of all, which is the way we inhere in the world as agents, as bodies among other bodies; without such inherence, no kind of gesturing, no distinguishing of oneself from one's situation, and hence no

kind of experience (for one's experience has to be distinguished from other people's experience) would be possible. A bodiless consciousness could have no conception of itself as a person.

To replace the agent in the world in this way is to avoid the absurdity of a consciousness situated outside the material world altogether; but it is not to adopt the equally unintelligible opposite extreme of regarding man as a mere part of nature. The reason why Marx's philosophy stands over and above the crude materialism of Engels, Lenin and all his other subsequent *vulgarisateurs*, is that he himself saw the equal absurdity of both extremes, and represented man as an antagonistic term *vis-a-vis* nature, exercising a free activity: "reality", he said, appears "as a result of contact between mind and the world, in the act by which thinking man takes possession of the world" (*German Ideology*). This kind of idiom is something completely strange to British philosophy, and the importance of *Thought and Action* is that may at last provide something like a basis for reunification with contemporary continental discussions, and enable British philosophy to be channelled back—and make its own vital contribution—to the main stream of European philosophical thought. Moral and political argument and philosophical argument may come together again and be acknowledged to be one and the same thing.

Thought and Action is not a socialist book: its flavour is more existentialist than anything else. Its value is in the light it sheds on the nature of philosophy itself, in the encouragement it gives to philosophy to emancipate itself from logic: at the present time philosophers are discouraged from all creative thinking, from any dealing with serious ideas, by an excessive fear of imprecision and the professional disrepute that this may entail; anything which helps to reverse this tendency must be welcomed by socialist theorists. But the relation must also be reciprocal: if anything like a socialist philosophy is to be developed in the present theoretical vacuum of British society, it is to *The Critique of Pure Reason* and *The German Ideology* rather than *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* that we must turn. Not even the October Revolution is more important to us than the truth.

COLIN FALCK

Chartism

Chartist Studies. Edited by Asa Briggs. MacMillan. 1959. 42s.

Between the wars there was little new writing on the Chartist movement. The standard texts—Dolleans, Beer, Rosenblatt, Slosson, West and Hovell—had all appeared before 1920. They were mostly written, putting the matter in broad terms, within the Fabian tradition; with, that is, a good deal of of sympathy for the movement as a whole, a marked tendency to applaud Lovett and denigrate O'Connor, a too-simple economic framework for the political story, and a lack of comprehension of its radical-revolutionary implications.

In recent years, some notable advances have been made, not least in the local history of the movement. The older histories were mostly written from, the national standpoint and from the national press, and the considerable regional diversities were largely smothered. To the growing appreciation of the importance of the local and regional histories of Chartism, this present volume is a most useful addition. It comprises a general introductory essay by the editor, a series of town and area studies—Manchester, Leeds, Leicester, Glasgow, Suffolk, Somerset and Wiltshire, Wales; then a second general essay by Asa Briggs, which serves to introduce three essays on national themes: the Chartist Land Plan, the Chartists and the Anti-Corn Law Leaguers, and the Government and the Chartists. The whole volume represents a substantial enlargement of our knowledge, and what we now want—without seeming ungrateful for what we have been given—is a companion volume which deals with the other

major urban areas so far excluded: London, Birmingham Bradford, Halifax, Bristol and Lancashire outside Manchester; and in Scotland, at least Edinburgh, Dundee and Aberdeen.

Like all volumes of essays by different hands, the quality of individual contributions varies a good deal; and this is a matter over which an editor has rather less control than is often believed. Among the town studies in this present book, Mr. J. F. C. Harrison's essays on Leeds and Leicester seem to me outstanding, and his study of Leicester in particular the best short account of a local movement yet published. Apart from the editor's own contributions, which are as lively as usual, Miss Brown's essay on the relationships between the Chartists and the Leaguers is a model—lucid, well argued and well written.

The Economic Background

A reading of this volume suggests many general questions of Chartist historiography that are worth an extended discussion. One is familiar to all who work in this field, and this is the absence of a definitive study of Feargus O'Connor. It is certainly no credit to any one that the leading figure of the most impressive working class movement we have yet witnessed in Britain is still without his biographer; and until we achieve a more reasoned assessment of O'Connor, much of Chartist history, and especially of its politics, will remain blurred and out of focus. A second matter needs commenting on at length. Most writers on Chartism have used a rather crude economic determinism as their guide to the varying fortunes of the movement. Briefly stated, the curve of depression and prosperity runs thus: between 1838 and 1842 we have the explosive combination of widespread unemployment and high food prices (the normal depression pattern in Britain before the sixties); then the recovery of the middle forties, associated with railway building, followed by a downturn in 1846–47 which reproduced, in a much less severe way the conditions of 1839. And finally, to complete the disintegration of the Chartist movement, the recovery at the end of the decade and the considerable domestic boom of the first half of the fifties. If we add to this simple pattern of slump and relative well-being, the existence of the Ten Hour movement, the hostility to the New Poor Law, the tensions and conflicts of a rapidly industrialising society, we have most of the economic and social factors that serve historians of all schools. There is no doubt, of course, that these are among the significant elements in the situation, but there are some facts which do not fit into this picture. What has been overlooked—largely because of the concentration upon the obvious sources of tension—is that the British economy, once the post-war difficulties were overcome, was geared to a high rate of economic growth from the 1830s. The rate of investment was high: total production was increasing at more than 3.5 per cent per annum; and foreign trade was just beginning its most rapid increases of all time (the greatest annual growth coming between 1840 and 1860). All the industrialising indices, including urbanisation, were at an all time high. The economic picture of the two decades before 1850 is therefore immensely complicated and confusing. A semi-industrialised country was continuing its industrialisation at great speed and in the process was enriching and enlarging its middle classes. It was also providing a minority of its wage earners—those with certain types of skill—with either the possibility of higher living standards or with the reality of improved conditions. At the same time as these important strata were improving their economic positions—and with the middle-classes the improvement by the mid-century was very marked—the degree of exploitation of the majority of the proletariat was intense. In all countries in the first main stage of their industrialisation, a high rate of capital accumulation must involve economic and political pressures to keep wages down to an iron level. Without these pressures, which included in Britain such items of policy as the New Poor Law and the Master and Servant Acts, a high rate of accumu-

lation, and therefore of investment and growth, could not be sustained. Moreover, a period of rapid transition, such as Britain was passing through after the middle twenties, involved the displacement of large groups of workers from their former ways of life—the handloom workers being only the best known of the social groups eliminated by the processes of change to the factory type of industrial organisation.

This more accurate picture of national trends has then to be taken down to local level. Because of the unevenness of change, within industries and between regions, the curve of national fluctuations cannot always be fitted directly to local conditions. The small master economy of Birmingham and Sheffield provided important differences in the economic and social structure from that of the West Riding; and the variations in the rate of transition to the factory within the main sectors of the woollen and the worsted industries all involved further distinctions within the wage earning classes. And when this heterogeneity has been closely defined, we then need to know the detailed movements of wages and earnings, rents and living costs and prices for each main sub-group within the proletariat.

This sort of detail cannot be expected in the relatively short essays of the present volume, but not all show the competence of Mr. Harrison's work. Mr. Read's essay on Manchester, for instance, exhibits many of the faults of academic history while missing some of its virtues. The least we expect of a professional historian is an adequate survey of the main sources, but Mr. Read has only skimmed certain of the material available to him, and much has remained beyond his reach. It is surely surprising that for such an important centre as Manchester, no use has apparently been made of the Home Office papers.

Mr. Read begins with an account of the economic background of Manchester in the '30s and '40s. He remarks on the division of the cotton workers between mill operatives and handloom weavers, the many thousands of Irish, especially among the hand workers, and the "almost unrelieved commercial depression" from the end of 1836 to 1842. Now this is the traditional picture of the economic background to Chartism in Lancashire, and it is greatly oversimplified. With the notable exception of 1839, the output of the cotton industry continued to rise rapidly, and factory employment was steady, between 1837 and 1840. Among the handloom weavers on the other hand, unemployment was a normal state of affairs, and they were especially hard hit by the fall in exports in 1837 and 1839. The only years when "unrelieved gloom" can properly be applied to all sections of the industry were 1841 and 1842. A crucial question, to which Mr. Read does not address himself, is the decline in the numbers of the handloom weavers by the end of the 1840's, a matter to which the Hammonds, early drew attention. It would be helpful, further, to know what other trades and social groups were involved in the Chartist movement, because even in Manchester "we are not cotton spinners all".

When Mr. Read turns to the political history of the movement, his use of evidence is not always convincing. Two examples must suffice. In the first instance, Mr. Read is concerned to prove that between the autumn of 1838 and mid-summer 1839 there occurred a decline in the mass support that Chartism enjoyed. The "most striking evidence" he can find for this decline is a comparison of the estimated attendance at two demonstrations, both on Kersal Moor, the first attracting an estimated 20,000 more than the second. Leaving aside the questionable usefulness of this sort of indicator, it is clear from the text (pp. 33, 46-7) that estimates of the attendance at both meetings cannot be accepted without qualification, and that it would be unwise to base any judgement upon the figures without other supporting evidence. And this is what Mr. Read does not provide.

The second example is a much more serious criticism and concerns the Chartist movement in 1848. Mr. Read repeats the conventional judgement (which stems from later Victorian

histories) than when "the presentation of the petition ended in fiasco the bottom fell out of the movement" (pp. 63-4). Now whether this is really the way bottoms fall out of movements can be left to another occasion, for it is not true that the Chartist movement either in London or the industrial North faltered in the months following the Kennington Common meeting. Had Mr. Read not stopped too early his no doubt wearisome search through the local Manchester press, he would have discovered that in Manchester, as in the rest of the industrial North, the tempo of the movement continued to rise throughout the summer of 1848; and that it was cut down by wholesale arrests from June onwards, made, almost always, on the evidence of police spies and *agents provocateurs*. The military set up an encampment on Kersal Moor towards the end of June, and while this may well have been the result of the middle class propensity to panic, it is also possible that the political situation was becoming inflammable. We can only look to our local historians to sift the evidence. One of the most interesting facets of the post-April 10th situation was the coming together in combined activity of the Irish and the Chartists. This occurred in London, Manchester and Leeds, and perhaps elsewhere. Mr. Read, who notes on p. 51 that the antagonisms between these two working class groups undoubtedly weakened the influence of Chartism in Manchester, fails to notice the *rapprochement* in 1848; and he does not mention or comment on an item of news in July 1848, when some 3-4,000 Chartists and Irish Confederates met "secretly" in Cheetham Hill Road "merely to test their efficiency" (*Manchester Examiner and Times*: Record of 1848). And surely it is at least worth noting, that when the Government decided upon large scale arrests in both London and Manchester, in August, to forestall a supposed rising, there were employed in Manchester 300 police, two troops of the Royal Irish Dragoons and two companies of the 30th Foot to make 15 arrests. Again, it would be helpful to learn whether these extraordinary precautions had any relevance to the real situation.

Government Restraint?

The story of 1848 is still the worst documented period in Chartist history. Mr. Mather, whose essay on "The Government and The Chartists" provides some new evidence for the whole period, also fails to answer most of the questions the political situation was throwing up in 1848. He notes that the behaviour of the Government was "characterised by forbearance and restraint" which, if a euphemistic phrase for "consummate and unscrupulous political skill", could perhaps be accepted. Mr. Mather has possibly interpreted Government too narrowly, for no one can seriously discuss the attitude and policy of Authority in 1848, or any other year of crisis before 1850, without including an analysis of the *obiter dicta* and the judgements of the courts, the use and disposition of the military, and the employment of spies. It would be illuminating to have an analysis of the changes in the Government's approach to the Chartist movement over the first nine months of 1848, for what seems to have happened was that the Government moved very cautiously until the end of April, during which period a large number of police spies and informers were insinuating themselves into the ranks of the movement: and then, from sometime in May, the Home Office seems to have taken off restraint and began to recommend arrests in increasing numbers. Since much of the evidence at the trials at the end of 1848 comes from police spies, it is difficult to determine how much truth there was in the allegations concerning large scale organisation, drilling with arms and plans for uprisings. But in general there seems to be no doubt that the genuine movement was growing quite rapidly in the spring and summer months of 1848 and that what broke it was the demoralisation attendant upon the discovery of the large scale use of informers and provocative elements, and the arrest of several hundreds of the national and local leaders. We do not have to look much

further, at least for the immediate causes of decline.

Asa Briggs has a comment upon Chartism which explains much of the failure of the movement in such an overwhelmingly proletarian society. He writes that perhaps "the most important historical feature of the Chartist movement . . . was that it demonstrated not the weaknesses of the working classes, which were obvious, but the strength of the middle classes". It was it may be added, not only their strength, but that in times of crisis, despite their hostility to the landed interests, the middle classes would rally, without hesitation, to the defence of property. There was no bitterness too great to be bridged when faced with the threat from below. This is what the *Times* meant when, two days after April 10, it wrote that the Kennington Common meeting "constituted a lesson which it is impossible for England to forget . . . London will crush treason at once, and that all classes are as one in this respect. Such is the new strength we have gained by that noble day's work, a strength which we could not easily have gained in any other way". There are other factors besides the nonconformist conscience to explain the fundamental stability of British society in the first half of the 19th century.

JOHN SAVILLE

Falling Rate of Profit

The Falling Rate of Profit by Joseph Gillman. Dennis Dobson 1958. 25s.

THE TENDENCY to a falling rate of profit is one of the main buttresses of Marx's theoretical structure. Marx develops the theory in chapter 13 of vol. III of *Capital*, basing it on certain relations between the constituents of the social product. The latter is made up of $c+v+s$, where c =constant capital reproduced, v =variable capital (the wage fund) reproduced, and s =surplus value (the source of all profit, interest, rent and payment of unproductive workers). Then we have three socially significant ratios derived from these quantities. (a) The rate of surplus value, representing the degree of exploitation of labour throughout the economy: $\frac{\sigma = s}{v}$. (b) The

average rate of profit, which is the form in which the fact of exploitation presents itself to the capitalist and which constitutes the incentive to continue in action as a capitalist: $\rho = \frac{s}{c+v}$. (c) The organic composition of capital, or the ratio

of past-labour-embodies-in-means-of-production to living labour: $\kappa = \frac{c}{v}$. These three ratios are connected by the

$$\text{relation:} \quad \rho = \frac{s}{c+v} = \frac{\frac{s}{v}}{\frac{c+v}{v}} = \frac{\frac{s}{v}}{\kappa+1} = \frac{\sigma}{\kappa+1}$$

This relation, since it involves only ratios of the quantities c , v and s , has the advantage that it is independent of the units (whether socially necessary labour-time or money-units of varying value) in which they are measured.

Marx's argument is that the accumulation of capital is a necessary feature of the capitalist system (*Capital*, I, Chs. 24, 25); that an increasing proportion of the new capital takes the form of c rather than of v (*Capital*, I, Ch. 25, §2-3), thus raising the ratio κ (also probably the quantity λ); that the constant tendency to a rise in κ necessarily produces a fall in ρ (*Capital*, III, Ch. 13), it being assumed that σ is either constant or rises more slowly than $1 + \kappa$.

Marx admits (*Capital*, III, Ch. 13) that this process may be temporarily checked by certain counter-acting forces. A rise in σ may be brought about by the lengthening of the working day; by the speeding up of machinery; by the cheapening of the workers' subsistence, thereby reducing the value of labour-power; or by the lowering of wages below the normal value of labour power. A fall in κ may be produced by the cheapening (in terms of labour) of the elements of constant capital through technical progress. Finally, the

development of foreign trade may work on both ratios, raising σ by cheapening the workers' subsistence, and lowering κ by cheapening the elements of constant capital. (Later

Thus far is part of the common stock of Marxist theory. What Gillman has done is to attempt to clothe the bare bones of theory with the flesh of numerical data. He has used American national-income statistics in order to test empirically the validity of the Marxian hypothesis about the rate of profit. At first sight the results are not favourable. Using the stock basis (the most appropriate one), of reckoning the rate of profit, he finds that, between 1880 and 1920, ρ has a strong downward trend from about 0.67 to 0.30; while σ rises, from 1.0 to about 1.3; and κ rises much more steeply from about 1.5 to about 4.5. This is according to the book; but after 1920 the rate of profit remains fairly steady round about 0.32 with a slightly rising trend. κ and σ fluctuate wildly; but their trends are almost level, at 4.2 and 1.35 respectively.

Various explanations can be suggested for these facts. The relative constancy of σ may be explained on the assumption that American labour, by a mixture of industrial bargaining power and political pressure, has reduced the hours of work, and has kept real wages well above the subsistence level (even the American conventional subsistence level)—in fact, at an approximate constant fraction of the real product of industry. (For an indication that this is not completely outside the Marxian schema, see *Value, Price and Profit*, chapter XIV. However, Marx did not seem to consider this a permanent possibility under capitalism). Gillman devotes a chapter to the problem of constant relative shares, and comes to the conclusion that modern capitalism is faced with the threat of being changed into a consumption economy—i.e. one in which production is carried on for the sake of consumption, and in which accumulation has become small or non-existent.

Gillman also deals with the effect of monopoly in keeping up the rate of profit. However, he does not make clear just how monopoly acts in terms of the Marxian variables, other than through promoting the technical changes noted above. The price-raising effect of monopoly is difficult to explain in Marxian terms. To the extent that monopolies raise price above the 'price of production' that would prevail under competition, they presumably make an extra-profit in exchange with the non-monopolised sector (including all the workers), thus, in effect lowering real wages and so increasing σ and, through σ , ρ .

But Gillman's really original contribution to the problem is his idea of unproductive expenditure. Under modern capitalism there is an ever increasing difficulty in realising surplus-value. Hence a constant proliferation of unproductive expenditures devoted, directly or indirectly, to this end. Advertising, selling costs, company-promoting, tax-dodging, prestige-building, public administration, military expenditure: all these are neither constant capital nor variable capital (wages). They represent a deduction from the surplus-value. (Strictly speaking, they are a part of surplus-value, but they are not available for distribution as profit and so do not enter into the rate of profit). We must now write: product = $c+v+s+u$. We can no longer determine s by subtracting $c+v$ from the total social product; we must make an additional deduction of u in order to obtain the newly defined s .

Gillman estimates u and subtracts it from his former estimates of s , so obtaining his new (net) s . (In one year, 1932, s becomes negative). On this basis he finds that both σ and ρ decline slightly, but not strikingly, over the period 1920-1939. Thus, he believes, the law of the falling rate of profit is validated.

A bolder and more independent handling of the Marxian schemata is called for at the present time. Gillman's data suggest that the Marxian ratios σ , κ and ρ are tending to constancy: in other words that, under extended reproduction, the different sectors of the economy, c , v and s , tend to expand at approximately the same rate. This, if true, is an important finding, from which many significant conclusions might be derived.

H. D. DICKINSON

The Point of Production

E. P. Thompson

"THE DANGER is," writes our colleague Alasdair MacIntyre, in a reproof to the New Left in the current *Labour Review*, "that one will fight a series of guerrilla engagements on cultural questions which will dissipate socialist energy and lead nowhere. What one hopes is that opening up these questions will lead one to see the basic antagonism in our society at the point of production."

This is good socialist doctrine; and perhaps we need the reproof. What is discouraging is the suggestion that we are back at a sort of ideological atavism which flourished in the days of *proletcult*. Because the way in which MacIntyre phrases his reproof entails the suggestion that, since the "basic antagonism" in our society is to be found in the nature of capitalist exploitation at work, therefore this is the only real or important antagonism, and that all other intellectual or political engagements are only of importance if they lead on to this.

I am sorry to seem to give a lesson in elementary socialist theory, but this kind of reasoning is no less than the ABC of socialism with the B and the C left out. The B and the C, in this case, are the class-struggle, which (whatever most contemporary "Marxists" have reduced it to) was a concept employed by Marx and Engels with the greatest subtlety. And the subtlety of the subtlest historical interpreter can never equal the rich complexity with which class antagonisms actually find expression in real history.

When Wilkes' *North Briton* No. 45 was condemned to be burnt in public as a "seditious libel", the London mob demonstrated and put out the executioner's fire by the simple method of mass urination. If we follow the iron logic of the atavistic deviant of Marxism, each one should have returned to his own point of production and demonstrated in the same manner against his boss. This might certainly have been a more class-conscious action. But it would not (as Wilkes' struggle did) have established the illegality of arrests under a General Warrant. And if General Warrants had been available to Home Secretaries in the nineteenth century, trade unionists would have been subject to wholesale arrest. And this, in its turn, would have made the struggle at the point of production a great deal more severe.

It would be amusing to follow up other examples (was the New Model Army's concern with the authority of the Bishops a "guerrilla engagement on cultural questions" which dissipated energy?) But these are not notes for an

undelivered lecture on the "Class Struggle" but an appeal for money. And these are my points:

1. Any serious engagement in cultural or political life should not dissipate, but generate, socialist energy. Because:

2. We do not have *one* "basic antagonism" at the place of work, and a series of remoter, more muffled antagonisms in the social or ideological "superstructure", which are in some way less "real". We have a class-divided society, in which conflicts of interest, and conflicts between capitalist and socialist ideas, values, and institutions take place all along the line. They take place in the health service and in the common room, and even—on rare occasions—on the television screen or in Parliament, as well as on the shop floor.

MacIntyre is right (and all the re-thinkers are wrong) if he means to stress that the power of the capitalist class rests upon the private appropriation of the means of life; and that there is no way to be a socialist society except through the expropriation of the capitalist class.

But the private ownership of the means of production is not a physical act of robbery taking place only at the point of production. It is built-in to our institutions, legal code, customs and possessive morality. When young Tom Mann joined an improvement society at a London engineering works which discussed Shakespeare he began to become an agitator.

There is no iron law of history, discovered by Marx or by Trotsky, which establishes the priority for "industrial struggle" over all other forms of political or intellectual conflict. Priorities change in different contexts. For example, the over-riding priority today—the critical point of engagement between the people and capitalist class power—is for the British people to take themselves out of the Natopolitan nuclear alliance. Any socialist grouping which attempts to arouse "a militant" industrial movement, and which does not propagate an understanding of this priority, is either opportunistic or atavistic. It may be *exploiting* the "class struggle". It certainly is not conducting a responsible struggle for the emancipation of the people from class rule.

There remains the phrase, "the point of production". It is more ambiguous than it seems. What do teachers and health service workers produce? If the ratio of those in primary productive operations to those in secondary ones is changing in favour of the latter, does

Left Clubs

this mean that the socialist "base is" weakened? And do ideologies, really originate at the "point of production", or by much more complex processes of conditioning within a class culture?

I am not asking these questions because I know the answers. I am suggesting, however, that the British Labour Movement throughout its history has tended to neglect a point of production of equal importance—the point at which socialist ideas and policies are produced. The British Labour Party can still muster 12 million-odd votes at the polls, but it does not own a daily newspaper, and (for all its organisational strength) it does not subsidise or support a single quarterly journal of serious socialist theory.

Granted the present constitution of Transport House, this is probably no immediate loss. But how far is the present complexion of the Party leadership itself a direct consequence of the absence of those things—theoretical discussion, international information, empirical research—which it is the business of a socialist journal to produce?

One consequence of this evil tradition of personality-puffing, modulated by stubborn industrial pragmatism, is that thousands of sincere members of the labour movement, as well as the younger generation of radical youth, find it difficult to understand the difference between socialist and capitalist journalism. They think that their responsibility towards a socialist journal has ended when they have paid their coin and taken their copy.

In fact, there is not one history of journalism in this country, but two. In the capitalist history, there are 101 pressures tending towards conformity and accommodation with the *status quo*. These range from Government or editorial censorship, the influence of advertisers, proprietors, and sales charts, to the individual journalist's desire for reward, in coin, influence, or prestige. The freedom and independence of capitalist journalism (including much intellectual, and even academic, journalism) co-exists uneasily with, and is generally negated by, the prevailing *unfreedom* of the commercial ethos; not only sales-values and pressures, but news-values, editorial-values, and class priorities.

On the other side of the water-shed, all the trends run the other way. Socialist journalism is unpaid or underpaid, advertising revenue is withheld, distributors and wholesalers are reluc-

tant or hostile, capital is not available or is available on terms which are unacceptable. The publication and distribution of a socialist journal is, in itself, a socialist *action* which runs athwart the normal drives of capitalist society. For its very existence it must depend upon the voluntary, co-operative ethos of socialism. There must be a special kind of relationship between editors and readers, who must also act as voluntary sales-promoters and financiers. Much of the history of our socialist movement can be written in terms of its journals, since journal and movement stand in a relation of mutual inter-dependence. The journals help to bring into being and to promote the movement; if the movement declines, the journals fail.

I do not mean that all socialist ideas, and creative, humanist values, must originate in the pages of socialist journals! They arise everywhere, on the canvas and in the poem, on the workshop floor and in the pit, in the home, the school and the university. But our kind of socialist journal should be a point of junction, where experience is exchanged, inter-connections are established, and priorities become clear. As such, it is both the product of the socialist movement, and the point at which this movement is re-produced.

If it is to do this effectively, it must be completely independent. It must extricate itself altogether from the commercial ethos. It must not become semi-parasitic upon the climate of capitalist news-values and cultural fashions, re-producing with vigour only those ideas and policies which can be absorbed by capitalist society without a fundamental adjustment.

This is a constant danger. For example, at the eleventh hour before the election, the Labour Party gathered up from the New Left some admirable ideas on youth problems, culture and leisure, and attached them to their programme. In one sense, this signified a victory—a response to our pressure. In another sense, it was no more than an attempt to attach radical young people and intellectual workers to a programme which was poisoned at the core by capitalist priorities: the nuclear strategy of NATO, and the ethos of the Opportunity State. But the community values we wish to foster among young people are antagonistic to the Opportunity State, and the cultural values we wish to promote cannot co-exist with the acceptance (even in imagination) of the strategy of human annihilation.

The editorial board of *New Left Review* is determined to propagate our ideas, and to seek every means to influence and co-operate with the existing labour movement. But this is not the same thing as wishing to become fashionable, or to be "taken up" within the prevailing climate of commercially-induced "public opinion." We mean to

exert a socialist influence on public opinion. If too many Labour politicians are now reducing themselves to the inanity of meteorologists trying to forecast the "climate of opinion" in five years time, it is going to be our job to make the weather.

A Socialist Tax

Now that I am no longer in an editor's chair, I can write about this with fewer inhibitions. Editing a socialist journal, during the past three years, has been like working double-shifts in an undermanned signal-box in the middle of Swindon junction.

The lines of communication stretch in every direction. Foreign socialist periodicals pile up on the floor. Comrades write in from Eastern Europe, America, France; it is of vital importance that the points should be changed in time, so that the information can pass through to British readers. One is at a point of junction between specialist and academic workers and readers in industry; each have their different scale of priorities, and lobby on their own behalf.

Few people have any real conception of the amount of work which can go into producing a socialist journal. What you receive for your coin is only the upper portion of that vast berg of correspondence, committee-work, editing and proof-reading, rejected or amended copy, relations with readers, contributors and editorial board. And beneath this again are the manifold operations of business-promotion, bookshop-relations, invoicing and accounting, and general distribution.

The *New Left Review*, with a full-time editor and business-manager, but (so far) without clerical help or adequate office premises and equipment, is better placed to tackle these problems than was either *ULR* or the *New Reasoner*. But the bulk of this work must continue to be done by voluntary workers. And, of course, financial problems are aggravated, not eased, by establishing a central office.

This is why we feel we have the right to institute—and campaign throughout the socialist movement for—a "Socialist Tax". It is the responsibility not just of the editorial board but of all readers to help to ensure that there are tolerable conditions at the point of production. Our editorial staff cannot give to the movement the services required if they are forced to work to a continual crisis tempo, with no time for serious editorial consultation, no time to keep adequately informed on industrial or international questions, little time to plan numbers or criticise copy, little time to meet readers and learn their experiences and criticisms, and growing piles of unanswered correspondence. We are trying to engage in serious political and intellectual work on behalf of the labour

movement, on less revenue than would be allowed on the expense account of a back-street firm manufacturing deoderants or bicycle pumps. On every side there are opportunities for developing and expanding our work. Again and again, we meet the barrier of strictly organisational problems. And we cannot surmount these problems until our running deficit is converted into a small plus sign.

By a Socialist Tax, we mean a regular monthly or quarterly payment into our bank account—preferably on a banker's order, so that we can budget in advance. If 1,000 readers paid us an average of 5s. per month, this would give us an annual income of £3,000 a year; or £2,000 when the portion in payment of *NLR* subscriptions is deducted. An income of this order would enable us to breathe; to serve your interests better; to produce more pamphlets, organise more conferences; to be *more* efficient, less bureaucratic or "cliquish" (as some find us who do not understand the degree to which we are buried under sheer routine administration), more democratic.

We think that, by three years of sheer hard labour and unpaid service, we have let you see what kind of people we are, what we can do, and so have earned the right to ask for this help. Taxation without representation? No, we do not have any scheme by which those who give us money will participate in the control of the journal, or election of the editorial board. The editorial conduct of a socialist journal ought not be subject to the processes of jockeying for influence (factions putting forward nominees, regional representation, etc.) suitable to political organisations. Political control over a paper which is the *organ* of a party is one thing. But most techniques for "reader-control" of other journals are either inefficient or fake. Democracy in socialist journalism consists in the act of publication itself. From the journals offered, readers select the one which appears to represent most closely their principles and aspirations; they identify themselves with it, support it, and the editorial board, in its turn, looks to the readers and contributors for criticism and advice. We shall certainly do this—and if you have ideas for improved reader-consultation, you must let us know.

The *New Left Review*, however, is more than a journal. Associated with the journal, there will be Left Clubs, discussion groups, conferences, educational and propagandist activity. And it is here, in the Clubs and their committees, that democratic initiatives will really find their expression. And these activities will help to shape the policy of the journal.

The old Left Book Club movement of the 1930's depended, for its publicity

and organisation, upon two things: the publishing house of Gollancz, and the organising influence of the Communist Party. The *New Left Review* and the new Left Clubs have neither a publishing-house nor a Party, or political pressure-group, to promote the work. We depend upon the spontaneous and amateurish initiatives of readers.

I think there are a great number of people who hold socialist opinions, and who work in the arts and professions, who might examine their consciences. Too many people like to have it both ways. There is a great deal of floating talk now about the integrity of the artist and the intellectual worker, who must at no costs allow this to be sullied by subjection to any political machine. And what next? Must we therefore leave politics in the control of politicians, who (it is assumed) have neither

art, intellect, or integrity? Or do the "intellectuals" offer to provide ideas and integrity, and expect the politicians to organise their distribution? To found the journals, find the money, organise the conferences clubs and schools?

Too many English socialist intellectuals have regarded politics in the tradition of the amateur gentleman. They expected someone else to do the hard business of living for them. And when they found that King Street or Transport House had exploited their talents for ulterior purposes, they resigned from activity with indignation. Finally, to prove their integrity, they write for *Encounter*, and draw a cheque from the Ford Foundation.

Perhaps the *New Left Review* is the most serious and sustained attempt in the history of British socialism for those who are actively producing the ideas to

also organise their distribution and propagation. We have the whole business to do, from the typewriter to the bookshop, from the subscriber's file to the promotion of new clubs. We cannot do this job without you. We cannot do without a guaranteed annual revenue, in donations and banker's orders. We need not only a Socialist Tax, but, in our readers, socialist tax collectors. Every person who professes socialist principles should be invited to express his convictions by making a regular payment to the independent socialist press. We do not only want your money. We want your criticisms, and we want your active help in 100 other ways. But we need money very much. And from those who have most money to spare, we need money most of all. And we need it now: at the point of production.

Manchester Left Club on Youth

Paul Rose

THE PROPOSALS for a new socialist youth organisation outlined in the *Guardian* of November 16 came as no surprise to those who have seen the changing mood of the Labour Party in its attitude to youth accelerated since the result of the general election. (What would have happened had we accidentally won?) Some of the probable changes were, until recently, regarded as unobtainable even by the extreme left of the Labour Youth Movement. Nevertheless, the prejudices aired by Quair in the *Labour Organiser* after Dennis Potter's letter to the *Times*, cannot stand up against the social changes implicit in the welfare-state-cum-H-bomb age which gave rise to the New Left.

The immediate success of the Manchester Left Club must have its lessons, particularly in an area where the few surviving Youth Sections are ineffectual shadows of their former selves. The image of our ageing body of veterans, shedding 75,000 supporters each year, and carrying high slogans which are becoming increasingly irrelevant to those who were born since the thirties, is reflected in the mirrors of the Labour Committee Rooms. The appeal to the mind rather than to the stomach is regrettable to some comrades, but it is the only appeal which is meeting with any success today, in terms of active participation in politics.

The first venture of the Manchester Left Club into pamphleteering was on the essential question of *Labour and the Youth Sections*. This pamphlet was drawn from the findings of Club members and members of North Western

Youth Sections, inhaling some of the fresh winds of the New Left. It offers ten points for the future development of the Youth Sections into a genuine socialist youth organisation. A number of copies have even been purchased on behalf of the NEC of the Labour Party and the Sub-Committee on Youth Organisation (copies are still obtainable, price sixpence, from 73 Downham Crescent, Prestwich, Lanes.)

It now appears that, "the Labour Party is to sweep away the whole present structure of its Youth Organisation"; the intention being to set up a movement with a national autonomous status and an annual conference, thus embodying the two principal proposals set out in the Manchester Left Club pamphlet. This autonomy, together with freedom to express opinions and pass resolutions, is, of course, the essential feature of the success of the Left Clubs. The proposals that members under twenty-one shall not be compelled to join the Labour Party is a useful compromise with our proposal that a status similar to that of the National Association of Labour Student Organisations might be considered. One cannot expect young people to accept automatically the dogmas handed down by a previous generation.

The delegation of special responsibilities for work among young people to Assistant Regional Organisers is nothing new—at least not in the North West—where, incidentally, a sub-committee on youth was set up some time before the National Party considered the question. The real need is a full-time Regional Youth Organiser,

who will not be burdened with organising postal votes, settling disputes, and stimulating municipal by-election campaigns, but who will be responsible to the Youth Movement rather than to Transport House. If, of course, the establishment of a youth department in Transport House means that it will be watched, petted and vetted by the Party, then nothing whatever will have been gained.

There is no mention of finance in the *Guardian* report. This is, of course, fundamental to the provision of adequate social facilities, although local Party branches could be of much greater assistance in providing rooms for meetings and in donating an annual grant. Nor is there any reference to that essential of any serious political organisation of the left—a journal which provides the focal point of activity. The *Universities and Left Review* and *New Reasoner* experience is the most recent example of this. The tallents at present expended on *Keep Left*, *Clarion*, *Rally* etc., must be channelled into one all-embracing magazine for socialist youth. Meanwhile, if this is not forthcoming, *Tribune* or *The Voice* could allocate a page to youth in each edition. The extreme sense of isolation felt by the present Youth Sections is, in part, due to the absence of any such national co-ordination.

Those of us who have been pressing for a serious approach to the problem of youth organisation, have never divorced the cultural, sporting and recreational activities from the political ones. Indeed, the merging of these is one of the most important aspects of the pro-

blem, and the only basis for a successful socialist youth movement. The barbecue, the hunt ball, and the informal marriage market, are essential features of the Young Conservative world. Let us assert that the world of football, cinema, skiffle, hiking, art, and the Halle Orchestra, is our world. The "social hedgehogs" on the left who see

no place for these things in the struggle for a better life, are ill-equipped to represent youth or to know what is meant by socialist humanism. There is no place for socialist "squares" in the age of Humphrey Lyttelton, Aldermaston, and Manchester United.

Whether or not socialist coffee bars from Transport House are merely a

Guardian stock exchange scare, the idea is fine. What is needed is not a managerial revolution, but the willingness to let young people manage their own affairs on a co-operative basis. The fellowship of working together in the new Socialist Youth Organisation will not only be a means to an end, but an end in itself.

ULR Club at Notting Hill

The London Club has increasingly found that the successful public meetings and discussion groups were not enough—especially for younger Club members. Many members had had no previous experience of political work of a direct kind. They found the prospect of throwing themselves into active Constituency Party work uninviting, because such a close identification with the Labour Party betrayed their deep criticisms and hostility towards the general drift of the Party and its policies. Nevertheless, they were anxious, both to have the experience of working together with like-minded comrades, and to give some more direct expression to their political beliefs.

The Notting Hill project and its subsequent developments were undertaken under the direct impact of events in the area—the race riots in 1958, the bitter antagonism towards West Indians, the murder of Kelso Cochrane and the re-emergence of Mosley and the satellite fascist organisations. The issues of principle here were clear—though, at the beginning, the way of working proved difficult. The problem was complicated, from the very outset by two important factors: the relative lack of organisation amongst the coloured community—West Indians have no experience of racial violence, and were, consequently, hesitant in coming to terms with it; and the ambiguous position of the local Labour Party and its candidate on the racial and immigration issues. This was a microcosm of the political dilemma of the Labour Party in the country as a whole: here was the issue—but where was the Party? The National Executive and the Council of the TUC made inspired murmurs—but they seemed to have no impact upon the majority of the Party at local level, and no attempt was ever made to carry through high policy at local level, where it mattered most. The situation confronted the Party with the sharpest issues of principle—but the general tone of the Party was ambiguous: its contacts with West Indians in the area—non-existent, the weight of its attack sharper against the left-wing minority than against the

White Defence League. Indeed, the statements of George Rogers at the time of the outbreak of violence so alienated West Indians in the area that it would have been difficult to try to work there on the basis of a direct appeal on behalf of the Party.

The original aims of the Club were (1) to hold a public meeting to demonstrate solidarity with West Indians in Britain; (2) to organise “direct action” of a socialist kind, bringing help where we could, but trying to raise the larger issues of policy and politics in the course of our activity.

The first project was, eventually, abandoned, particularly when the second project began to succeed. Some 40–50 people offered help, under the direction of Donald Chesworth, a local Councillor whose work in this field has been remarkable. This work was immediate, remedial—and, of course, limited in scope. They were stop-gap measures—but the situation demanded them, for at the heart of the problem in Notting Hill is the whole question of housing, community facilities, and the rack-renting practices of some of the larger landlords (white and coloured). Our purpose was to provide immediate physical help for those other groups who were already at work there: and to raise, at the same time, the more general issues which relate to the life of the community.

The problem of Notting Hill is not, at root, a question of race at all—though the racial situation naturally sharpened every aspect. It is primarily a problem of the community itself—the shocking condition of housing, the lack of community amenities, the shifting nature of the population, the difficulties of employment, and the short-sighted and temporising policies of the Council planners and builders. The rate of property deterioration, the steep rise in rents, the rapid drop in social “tone” and status have all, together, proved too much for the community to bear—particularly for a community without roots, without morale or hope. Certain zones are scheduled for re-development, but the pace is hopelessly slow. The area is

teeming with young people, but the Youth Clubs are infrequent, ill-equipped and unattractive. During the hottest month of the year—August—when more West Indians and youngsters were on the street than at any other time, many Youth Clubs closed. The area is full of young married couples—but there are practically no creches where working mothers can leave their children. The streets are crammed with small children—but there are no playgrounds anywhere in sight. A prosperity state? And Notting Hill in the centre of the largest city on earth?

Without a community sense—that is to say, a spirit of common responsibility, a life of shared experiences, community provisions, a sense of being able to affect directly the life, growth and renewal of the area, an expanding physical horizon—Notting Hill had no human resources with which to combat the special problems of a multi-racial population. The socialist perspective—change, control, common responsibility, reconstruction, tolerance—had been totally lost, particularly amongst large sections of working class people in the area, where conditions were at their worst. Such an area was ripe for racialism, anxious to find a scapegoat, yearning after a violent release from the many problems which hedged it round. The West Indians were sitting ducks.

In August, the character of the project changed in two important ways. In the first place, the group of helpers took on a new task—that of keeping a central Youth Club in the area open during the month of greatest tension. The problem of youth—sharp in some form in every working class district in London—can be seen in its sharpest and most aggravated form in Notting Hill. And here, among the disaffected, bored young people who congregated at the street-corners, the first seeds of fascism were sown, as the organised racist groups began to appear in the open, and the area was penetrated at every point by a vigorous propaganda and leafletting campaign. This Youth Club found a temporary home—but it proved so successful, that it has now become permanent. But there was a

more general problem—the need to marshal and analyse our experiences into some kind of pattern, and to offer something more permanent and more searching in the place of activity for its own sake. The group decided to constitute itself into a fact-finding and working study group, to gather the basic information about the area, and to use this as the basis for some hard, purposeful thinking about what could be done by the people themselves.

The study group is now half-way through its detailed discussions on the studies of housing, planning, employment, education, welfare services, social and political attitudes which have been prepared. Their aim is, now, to prepare a pamphlet, which makes a detailed critique of the conditions which prevail, and which offers some detailed recommendations for improvement.

At the same time, Residents' Associations are beginning to be formed—the core of each Association being, of

course, local tenants and residents.

This account misses two other aspects of the project which will be discussed in more detail in the pamphlet. It should not appear that *ULR* has been the *only*—or even the most active—group at work in Notting Hill. There are many organisations—sometimes, it seemed, *too* many—and many people of good will and sympathy anxious and ready to assist. It also misses what, for many, were the most exciting weeks of the project—the bitter, frustrating weeks of the Election itself. During these three weeks, Mosley and the fascist groups had the run of several areas in Notting Hill, and the scenes were sometimes too grim to be believed. His vote was not high—but his *support* is far higher than the voting figures suggest. The groups were also active at local Labour Party meetings. And, although *ULR* has often been regarded as meddling outsiders by the local Party, we were

ready to help steward meetings which might otherwise have been broken up by planted hecklers.

What is, perhaps, more to the point, the election was a time of *relative* inactivity for us on the more positive aspects of the project. Keeping fascist hecklers in their seats is, in every sense of the word, a holding operation. By and large, the party political divisions touched the area itself and its problems at so few points, that it was worthless trying to work. We had to suspend operations. In many ways, the Election was a shadow affair. It had to be gone through—but did it matter? In a very real sense, except for the White Defence League, and the National Labour Party and the British Union of Fascists, Notting Hill is for the moment *beyond* Party politics.

S. H.

(Written up from notes by George Dark, Secretary of the *ULR* Notting Hill Study Group).



'It's a free country, isn't it?'